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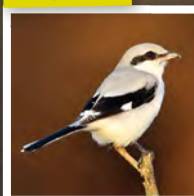
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WESTERN BONELLI'S WARBLER BY DANIELE OCCHIATO (WWW.AGAMI.NL)



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**YOU** might think an  
organisation with a name  
like Raptor Alliance would  
be supporting Britain's most  
persecuted group of wild birds.  
You'd be wrong: it lobbies on

behalf of pigeon fanciers against Peregrine  
Falcons and Sparrowhawks, with potentially  
damaging consequences for these protected  
birds of prey. Raptor Alliance believes the  
law should be changed so that pigeon fanciers  
can apply to have 'problem' raptors relocated  
– an unworkable but also unnecessary idea,  
as only 14 per cent of domestic pigeons not  
returning to their lofts are thought to become  
prey items.

Of course, some collateral damage ought  
to be expected when a million pigeons bred  
domestically each year are destined for skies  
already occupied by natural predators. But  
what really struck me about this attitude  
was the implicit assumption that nature  
is an inconvenience to be controlled or  
tampered with whenever it suits. A similarly  
warped view of our natural heritage is also  
the hallmark of the Countryside Alliance,  
an organisation supporting the destruction  
of wildlife. The CA recently unleashed an

ill-conceived tirade against BBC presenter  
Chris Packham – voted by readers of this  
magazine as Conservation Hero of the Year  
– for "blatant political propaganda" when he  
did little more than highlight serious wildlife  
crimes.

These latest attacks on the conservation  
movement and the welfare of wildlife follow  
another summer of illegal raptor killings, and  
an ongoing campaign by pro-game shooting  
You Forgot the Birds against the RSPB and  
its work. There is a co-ordinated feel to this  
sustained negative press about a conservation  
body cleared by the Charities Commission of  
charges made against it.

The RSPB may have its faults, but it's no  
different in that respect from any other large  
organisation, and its work in the countryside  
deserves commendation. More than that, the  
society and others who speak out on behalf  
of our natural heritage need defending from  
partisan interests who are far more concerned  
with their own agendas than the sustainable  
management of our disfigured countryside  
and its fast-declining wildlife.

*Dominic Mitchell*

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BLACKPOLL WARBLER BY STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)



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JEFFREY REED AND VICTORIA SCHWENTNER



## Swallows on the sand

**A**s migration builds up throughout autumn, birds not only have to contend with finding food and resting enough to continue on their journey, but also the vagaries of the weather which can suddenly change to catch them unaware.

Conditions probably don't get worse than during hurricane season in North America, as illustrated by this huge October 'fall-out' of Tree Swallows on their southward journey at the world-famous migrant hot-spot of Cape May, New Jersey.

The birds had originally set off in fair conditions further north. However, with the remnants of a hurricane producing strong winds and horizontal rain overnight, birders approaching the beach the next morning found thousands of exhausted Tree Swallows lined up on the sand, attempting to recover from what must have been a traumatic experience.

In fact, the hirundines were so exhausted that people were able to walk right up to them without disturbing them, and the swallows could be photographed at close quarters. Such atypically confiding behaviour serves as a reminder of the perils of long-distance migration, and that the birds may fall easy victim to predation under such circumstances. ■

## FINDER'S REPORT

# Up close and very personal



Taking a Scilly pelagic is probably a birder's best chance of seeing Fea's Petrel in north-west Europe, and this year what are surely the best photos of the species ever taken in British waters were on one of these trips. **Bob Flood** tells the tale.



Every detail of the diagnostic darker underwing contrasting with bright white underparts and the tell-tale deep and 'chunky' bill of Fea's Petrel are on view in this clinching and breathtaking shot.

**Fea's Petrel: at sea, Scilly, 16 August 2015**

**THE** August Scilly Birder Special Pelagics are now an established entry on the British birding calendar (see [www.scillypelagics.com/bsp.html](http://www.scillypelagics.com/bsp.html) for details). Hundreds of birders have made the pilgrimage to Scilly for Wilson's Storm-petrel and the large shearwaters. The jewel in the crown, though, is Fea's Petrel and on 16 August the lottery ticket came up for a charmed group of 25.

At about 11 am, I was chumming off the stern of MV *Sapphire* when I noticed an interesting petrel some way downwind, but it only showed for a split second. I continued chumming and kept an eye open, hoping it had smelt the fish oil and was heading our way low over the water.

A minute or two later I glimpsed the petrel rise over the swell. It was perhaps several hundred metres away by the time I got my bins on it.

Head-on, its wing actions, flight path and greyish colour reminded me only of the *feae*-complex and so I shouted: "Get on this petrel!" That certainly woke everyone up! It looked thickset, and when it banked I saw dark underwings in stark contrast to a white body. With no doubts, I yelled: "Fea's Petrel!"

The Fea's approached and then circled the boat several times, at one point just 3 m off the stern. It checked out the tempting chum as it lingered around the boat. The event was timed at two and a half minutes from the first photo to the last. It then meandered away, giving another minute and a half of viewing. The sighting was nothing short of magnificent.

Sounds from the deck were equally memorable. Momentary stunned silence was broken by subdued comments of "Oh my god" and "I can't believe it". All the while photographers were shooting at a rapid rate like paparazzi with a much-desired



PETER MOORE

The Fea's Petrel showed its identifying features even when it headed off, leaving lucky participants on the pelagic trip exalted and stunned into momentary silence, until the congratulations broke out.



The white bill surround is particularly notable in this head-on image, and so many birders must fantasise about having such a view on a long pelagic trip. Even at this angle, the depth of the bill is obvious.

JOE PENDER



The upperwings showed the 'W' pattern of the darker brown feathering, contrasting with the notably pale grey and attenuated rear end. The bill looks particularly bulbous in this shot.

celebrity. With good views of its robust bill and body, I gladly announced to all that this was a "no-issue Fea's" and that they could all tick it – perhaps a bit cheeky given that the chairman of Rarities Committee was on board.

The Fea's Petrel departed and the celebrations began: beaming smiles, backslapping and handshakes. Groups huddled over camera screens to check fine details and, I expect, to dispel any doubts that the bird was actually real.

The images taken show just how close the Fea's approached the boat. What's more, they confirm its identity without any doubt, rather than it being the similar-looking but more lightly built Zino's Petrel. Its heavy build stands well outside the range of Zino's and – of particular note – the bill was thick and had a deep notch between the tip of the nasal tubes and the top of the bill tip. The body was thickset, with a full chest,

plump belly and broad hips. Determining whether this bird was a Desertas Fea's Petrel or a Cape Verde Fea's Petrel, however, is not so straightforward and a challenge that I will take on at a later date.

This Fea's Petrel encounter is surely destined to become legendary in British seabirding, and those 'fortunate 25' will no doubt gladly tell you: "I was there." ■

### STATS & FACTS

**First recorded:** Sea area Sole, Scilly, 8 July 2001.

**Last recorded:** Sea area Sole, Scilly, 6 September 2004.

**Previous British records:** 3 (though there are 145 accepted records of Fea's-type Petrel, most of which are likely to have been Fea's).

**Mega rating:** ★★★★★



## FINDER'S REPORT

# Cornwall strikes again



**Martin Birch** spied a tropicbird heading past a famous watchpoint, but while those present got onto it, this fifth for Britain was as fleeting as all the previous records. Still, it laid a family ghost to rest ...

Red-billed Tropicbird: Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 28 August 2015

I have been making the long drive down from Bromley, Kent, to Cornwall at least biannually, if not more frequently, for near enough three decades now. With my brothers I've been lucky enough to share a second home in St Just since I was a kid, and over the years much of my best birding moments have been centred in and around the valleys and headlands of West Penwith. But then living in Bromley can hardly compete – unless you like parakeets!

Late August is 'seabird season' so I was hoping to reconnect with the larger shearwaters, but also spend some time birding away from the crowds. I work for an NGO in London and since June I had been working through a series of exhausting operational challenges.

As a family, we travelled down on the Monday and I made a bee-line for Porthgwarra the next morning. Visibility was appalling, and my scope was getting drenched, so I soon decided to cut my losses and head home.

By Thursday, with the winds drifting round to the west, I thought I would try Pendeen during the morning rather than Porthgwarra. I love Pendeen, as I reckon the light is better, the shearwaters come closer and it's only five minutes from the house. I wanted to find my own birds, not simply watch what others were calling. Sure enough I was the only birder there that morning and enjoyed good numbers of Sooty and Balearic Shearwaters up until 8.30 am. There were no larger shearwaters at Pendeen, but they were continuing to stream past Geoff Wyatt and others at Porthgwarra.

Friday morning arrived and I decided to return to Porthgwarra. Thank God I did!

I was first on the headland, arriving just after 6.30 am and a few minutes ahead of James Garside, who had travelled down from South Wales. Cory's Shearwaters were coming through more or less continuously and by 7.30 am the count had reached about 50 birds. We'd also had a nice Pomarine Skua, a couple of Bonxies, a few European Storm-petrels and a couple of Sooty Shearwaters by the time Geoff Wyatt appeared for his mammoth fourth all-day stint.

Just after 8 am, I decided to

some height. I realised later that I hadn't even said what it was, but the panic in my voice seemed to be enough for those nearest to me to swing their scopes onto the bird.

I was hoping that Geoff, who was sitting directly behind me and had been calling and identifying most of the good stuff all week, would quickly get onto it which he did, but to my astonishment he then shouted: "It's a Sabine's." I was thinking: "What? Is he watching a different bird?"

I shouted: "But look at its tail!" but the bird was now flying directly away from us and I think Geoff was working only from the

"Red-billed Tropicbird!" I said: "I am shaking too much to keep the scope still."

The tropicbird then drifted west. Various birders scrambled to their feet to get to the other side of the rocks that were sheltering us, only for someone else to then shout: "It's coming back!"

Amazingly, the bird was now returning towards the Runnel Stone and was even visible to the naked eye. It seemed to associate with a couple of passing gannets before coming level with us, but once more it changed direction and headed west. This time we lost the bird for good.

The bird was clearly a Red-billed Tropicbird, and probably a sub-adult given the shortish streamers projecting beyond the wedge-shaped tail, the grey vermiculations to the upperparts and inner wing, and orange-coloured bill. Other species of tropicbird could be ruled out by the extensive face mask and the wing pattern: the black outer primaries and black primary coverts created Sabine's Gull-like outer wing markings that had initially confused Geoff. Red-tailed Tropicbird has white outer primaries and White-tailed Tropicbird, a possible but highly unlikely confusion species, has white primary coverts.

The bird had effectively performed a complete loop just to the west of the Runnel Stone. I suspect that it had originally come in from the west rather than the east, which might explain why no one had picked it up in the usual viewing arc between the pinnacles and the Runnel Stone.

By now everyone was standing up. Geoff was on the phone, and there was a lot of punching of the air, incredulity and hugs. Twelve birders from various parts of Britain were united in a single almost unique birding moment.

In all, the tropicbird had shown

“As it flew over the gannets, the unmistakable plumage and characteristic flight pattern caused a near cardiac arrest”

swing the scope right and watch a group of Northern Gannets that were loafing around the Runnel Stone (the name of a buoy about a mile out from the headland, which birders use as a marker for calling out passing seabirds) when what I knew instantly was a tropicbird appeared.

I've seen all three species of tropicbird on a number of occasions, first in the Caribbean in the early 1990s and then the southern hemisphere species around various Pacific islands in 1997 and again in 2013. As it flew over the gannets, the unmistakable size, structure, plumage and characteristic flight pattern caused a near cardiac arrest, and it was this inability to stay calm that almost blew it!

Screaming and swearing, I shouted: "Get on to the Runnel Stone now" and then almost immediately "it's over [it] now", as the bird powered west at

wing pattern. Of course, what felt like a lifetime was really only a matter of seconds before the bird – reminiscent of a skua in flight style – rose up, semi-stalled and then banked, and at that moment I think everyone realised the enormity of what they were looking at. I heard birders yell: "Tropicbird!" and of course I realised at that point that I had not even said what it was.

Thankfully, the bird changed course and started to head towards land, albeit still in a westerly direction. With a gentle southerly breeze and a little cloud cover punctuating otherwise blue skies, the tropicbird's plumage dazzled in the near-perfect conditions.

At this point my language remained unprintable, and I remember shouting, among other things: "Can anyone get the bill colour?" and others shouting:

for around five minutes and every one of the 12 birders present had seen it well, including a young lad who can hardly have been 10 years old. I remember walking up onto the St Ives headland one early September morning in 1983, when I was not much older than him, and stumbling across what is still regarded as one of the best seabird wrecks ever. That day cemented me in a birding odyssey that has now spanned more than three decades. I hope 28 August 2015 does the same for him.

One more ghost was also laid to rest. My younger brother, Andy, found Britain's only Yellow-throated Vireo way back in 1990 a few miles north of Porthgwarra, in Kenidjack Valley.

As the decades passed, I had reconciled myself to never being able emulate my brother's stunning find. But now we both have a reason for smiling whenever we return to this most beautiful part of the British Isles. ■

## STATS & FACTS

**First recorded:** Sea area Sole, Scilly, 7 June 2001.

**Last recorded:** Pendeen Watch, Cornwall, 18 August 2013.

**Previous British records:** 4

**Mega rating:** ★★★★★

EXCLUSIVE

# Yacht crew claim Britain's first Red-billed Tropicbird



When ROGER BARNES encountered an 'unusual' seabird off the Isles of Scilly, he was intrigued and took some photographs. It wasn't until a good month later that he realised the significance of his sighting – if accepted, it will be Britain's first Red-billed Tropicbird.

Our boat, *Margie Rita*, left New Quay, Ceredigion, on Saturday 2 June, embarking on a five-week cruise to Mull of Galloway, which lies in the Bay of Biscay to the south of Brittany – a journey of some 1,200 miles. Of course we had no idea that on this sea we would see a magnificent seabird, later identified as a Red-billed Tropicbird.

*Margie Rita* is a 32 ft blue-veiled sailing yacht. Our crew for the first leg of our trip was George Legg from New Quay, Martin White from Manchester, who accompanied and led us, Paul Fraser, a keen dinghy sailor from Northwich, and myself, the skipper and the nearest thing on board to a birdwatcher.

We left New Quay in a strengthening wind and instead of sailing directly to the Isles of Scilly put into Falmouth, Pembrokeshire, for the night to see out some bad weather. The next day we

better and we made Trevelick and spent three enjoyable days rediscovering the delights of Scilly. We walked around Trevelick and Blyth, sailed to St Agnes, where we visited the lovely church and the graves of lost fishermen, including many Leggs who might be a long-hauling of George's family, and spent a night in Hugh Town on St Mary's.

We left the island at about 10 am on Thursday 7 June, with a fresh northerly wind and a clear sky – in short, ideal sailing conditions for our passage through the Channel de la Helle to Douarnenez in Brittany. By 11 am we were in full sail. George was on the helm, Paul was looking out the side, and I was sitting at the chart table, doing the sort of things that skipper's do, like trying to work out where we were and what the tide was doing for us. We were about 20 miles south-south-east of Scilly when George called out on deck to see an unusual-looking bird, the like of which he had never seen in all his years at sea. It looked



Like the Red-billed Tropicbird, Martin White will be paying for most repeat performances as this year's pelagic season heats up.

and flew in large circles around the boat. We thought that on more than one occasion it was considering landing. We have in the past had frigate birds land on the boat, but not for a few years and then only on the one occasion, but it stayed with us for about five minutes, coming close enough for us to get a good look and take photographs.

**Tern-like**  
The bird had the appearance and mannerisms of a large tern. I knew it was not a European bird, or to be more precise it wasn't in my 1993 edition of *Pullar's Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. It flew between 100 and 120 ft, occasionally hovering. We noticed immediately the very long tail longer than the body, but we could not decide whether it comprised one or two streamers. The bird was predominantly white and had a single black-tipped tail. There was a conspicuous eye-stripe and black on the wings towards the tips. The feet were black.

While the others were watching the bird, I rolled down to change the lens on my camera. As I only have two, a 35 mm and a 90 mm, the choice was not difficult. I put on the 90 mm, hoping that the bird would come close enough for me to get a good shot. I set the shutter speed at 1/1000th of a second, the aperture at f/2.8, and pressed the shutter at 30 ft. At the time I was using some old Kodak 200 ASA film.

Fortunately the bird obliged and I managed to get one good shot. I use a Leica SL, which helps in these circum-



Above: the Red-billed Tropicbird approached to within 30 feet.

stances as the viewfinder has a greater field of view than the lens, making it easier to track something in flight. The bird left us and we pressed on with the rest of our holiday, enjoying such delights as Blowing Rock, Seafish, porpoises and dolphins, as well as plenty of the usual seabirds.

It was not until my return home to Knuttsford more than a month later that the significance of our sighting became apparent. I first phoned Jeff Crane, a 'tern' man, who identified the bird from my description as a Red-billed Tropicbird. I then passed the word to Sheila Davies, chairman of the Cheshire and West Cheshire Ornithological Society, who has seen and photographed Red-billed Tropicbirds in the Galapagos and Sotog. She confirmed the identity and

George Legg, left, was the first to pick up the exotic seabird as it approached. He realised it was something out of the ordinary.

## Tropicbird: dead rare

Red-billed Tropicbird is a ground-nesting oceanic islander. The only regular breeding site in the Western Palearctic is on the Cape Verde Islands, where the birds, of the Atlantic race *marina*, are said to be 'in alarming decline' (Cramp and Simmons 1977). Birds of the Indian Ocean race *indica* are regular in the Red Sea, although outside the breeding season they roam the tropical coasts.

Only one individual has previously been seen alive in European waters – a bird 162 km west of Cabo San Vicente, Portugal, on 12 August 1988 (Meredith and Young 1990). However, thousands of corpses have occurred on several occasions.

**Right:** the Red-billed Tropicbird was washed up at Landguard, Suffolk, on 17 February 1982. This bird was of the race *indica* – note the black cutting edges to the orange-red bill.

with records from France, The Netherlands and the UK. The latter record involved an adult of the race *indica* washed up at Landguard, Suffolk, in 1982. It was not accepted onto the British List as presumably the corpse had been washed overboard during clearing of a ship in the nearby Felixstowe container port.

**References**  
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BIRDWATCH SEPTEMBER 2001

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Two of Britain's Red-billed Tropicbirds have been reported exclusively in *Birdwatch*, including the first record on 2 June 2001, described by its yachtsman finder, Roger Barnes, in our September issue that year. He noticed an unusual-looking bird about 20 miles east of Scilly, as his yacht was heading away from the Isles to Brittany. As is sometimes the case, Roger wasn't a birder but being familiar with the more regular seabirds, he knew he had seen something special and took the clinching photographs which enabled the bird's identification later.

This Red-billed Tropicbird also featured exclusively in the magazine two years ago. It involved the most recent accepted record, a controversial single-observer sighting which was fortunately photographed as it flew past the seawatching hot-spot of Pendeen on 18 August 2013 (see *Birdwatch* 256: 60-61), unseen by other birders assembled there. Tom Whiley was lucky enough to be able to rattle off several shots of the bird in profile and from the rear, but was unable to alert others to its presence as he was too far away. Like the other three British records the bird remained untwitchable and never seen again.



TOM WHILEY

# Egret stampede!

Britain's biggest-ever flock of Cattle Egrets arrived at the turn of September, reviving thoughts of a possible mass colonisation.

CHRIS DRESH



Cattle Egrets: Cowards Marsh, Dorset, 30 August 2015

The Cattle Egrets at Cowards Marsh produced a sight more typical of sub-Saharan Africa, but this kind of scene may yet become regular in Britain.

It was certainly a surprising sight when 22 Cattle Egrets were seen together and photographed on Cowards Marsh, near Christchurch Harbour, by Chris Dresh, Senior Dorset Field Officer at Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. However, this was soon trumped by 25 at Brighstone, Isle of Wight, early on 3 September – quite probably the same flock with a few additions – and reminded many of the influx of late 2007, which resulted in the species breeding on the Somerset Levels the following spring. The presence of two birds overwintering at Dungeness, Kent, earlier this year may well have added to this feeling.

However, despite the fact that they appeared to have vanished afterwards, these incidents show that such invasions are increasing in frequency and may yet lead to the predicted colonisation that the events of 2007-08 appeared to unsuccessfully augur.

Many birders would also have been reminded of a historical precedent: it is exactly 20 years since a Little Egret influx in 1995 resulted in the first successful breeding attempt of that species on Brownsea Island, Dorset in 1996, after 110 were in Poole Harbour the previous winter

(and upwards of 1,000 were wintering over the whole country). Colonies in northern France had built up since 1960, when the species first bred in Brittany. However, until 1988 no more than 15 individuals were recorded annually in Britain, and it was very much a spring overshoot.

Then suddenly, in 1989, at least 40 birds showed up in autumn, after which such counts became regular and even increased. Concentrations were always distributed on the coast from Chichester Harbour, Dorset to the Scillies, and gave a good indication of where the eventual colonisation would take place.

Cattle Egret's biology is, however, different to Little Egret, and the species tends to lead a more nomadic existence. It is one of the world's great colonisers, having undergone a huge range expansion in the 20th century, after reaching southern Africa from Central Africa in the late 19th century. Vagrant Cattle Egrets were already noted in Guyana and Suriname in 1877, but had to wait until 1930 to become fully established in South America. The conquering of North America began in Florida in 1953 at now breeds as far north as the southern shores of the Great Lakes.



This year's Cattle Egret sightings were concentrated very much on the south and south-east coasts around the Isle of Wight, Kent and Essex, and the only large gathering was the Cowards Marsh/Brighstone flock (see the above BirdGuides.com map, left). The invasion of 2007-08 was on a much broader front along the south coast, with multiple sightings even in Ireland and birds dispersed much further inland (above, right). Perhaps it will take a much more concerted invasion like this before a pair or two decide to properly begin a colonisation.

Latitudinally this equates their range with northern France, so it is perhaps no surprise that they haven't quite reached Britain yet. However, with the effects of climate change encouraging other southern species to spread north, and with our wetland reserves providing habitat for foraging and nesting, a repeat of Little Egret's performance by Cattle Egret may yet be on the cards. This recent unprecedented sighting certainly inspires such thoughts again. ■

## STATS & FACTS

**First recorded:** South Allington, near Kingsbridge, Devon, 1805.

**Last recorded:** one or two individual birds are now almost always present in Britain.

**Previous British records:** only 3 records prior to 1962, after which the species has fast become a fairly numerous scarcity.

The first Cattle Egret pair to breed in Britain produced just one fledgling (centre bird) when they nested in Somerset in August 2008.



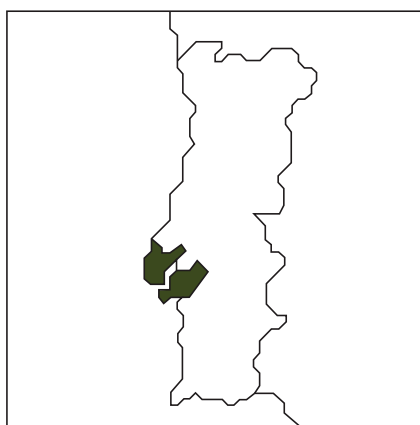
JEFF HAZELL

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Rarities: August 2015

# French storks invade



**Josh Jones** reports on the Black Storks dispersing from France which caught the eye of many a birder, in a month otherwise notable for rare seabirds.

ANNETTE DAVIES

The major talking point of the first half of the month was an impressive influx of Black Storks from the near-Continent. Following a fly-over in Co Durham on 1st, what was presumably the same individual was then near Haggerston, Northumberland, on 2nd. Bearing a white ring, this bird was initially thought to be that found at Spurn, East Yorks, on 3rd. The ring inscription of 'F05R' revealed it to be a French stork ringed at the nest in forest near Bossus-lès-Rumigny, Ardennes, on 3 June 2015.

However, the presumption that these were one and the same was blown apart by the appearance of another, bearing similar jewellery, at Loch of Strathbeg, Aberdeenshire,

from 6th. With 'F05R' still at Spurn (where it remained to 10th, before heading north to Grimston and then south to Lincolnshire on 11th), the Aberdeenshire bird was unquestionably a different individual, and so it proved – this was 'F05P'. Feedback from the co-ordinators of the ringing scheme soon revealed them to be siblings.

Further records of Black Stork were in North Yorkshire on 5th, where a bird over Wykeham Forest at 11.10 am was presumably the same one over Mickleby at 13:30. That morning another



**Above:** the Black Stork that frequented the town of Bexhill, Surrey, from 12th cut an incongruous sight as it played cat and mouse with birders among residential gardens.

TIM WHITE

**Left:** this Baird's Sandpiper at Seaton Marshes, Devon, on 15th was one of two in the country.



MICK RODWELL

Both Caspian Tern sightings during the month were brief, but this individual at Holland Haven, Essex, on 1 August (front bird with Herring Gulls) remained for the longest time, though even this was for just a matter of minutes after 10 am, before it flew off south-west.



LEE GREGORY



**Aquatic Warbler occurrences have become so infrequent now that it has been put back on the list of birds assessed by the Rarities Committee; because of that, this 'classic' bright ochre juvenile on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 15th would certainly have been popular off-island.**

drifted over Cley, Norfolk, at 11.10 am, while a bird at Gibraltar Point, Lincs, on 5th was seen again on 7-8th and then on 11th, a day when at least two (and probably three) were in Lincolnshire, with the Spurn bird arriving at Saltfleet and further records coming from as far north as Grimsby. On 7th, another juvenile was tracked in Kent between Hythe and Dungeness before it drifted back north over Greatstone and Lane, while a record from Saltburn, Co Durham, that day was presumably the North Yorkshire bird of 5th. On 8th, a juvenile was found at Arne, Dorset, lingering in the area until the following morning and giving Hen Harrier Day South attendees a pleasant bonus. The bird then

flew over Portland a couple of times on 11th, before settling near Abbotsbury in the evening.

On 12th, a bird was found in the Bexhill area of East Sussex and was seen there intermittently until the month's end, though it proved elusive as it fed in secluded gardens. The Spurn bird also moved back to East Yorkshire and settled at Stone Creek, lingering into September, while its sibling hung around at Loch of Strathbeg to 24th. Elsewhere, a bird that flew over Landguard, Suffolk, on 28th was later seen near Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.

### Tropical delight

August is a month synonymous with rare seabirds, and none was

more rare than the immature Red-billed Tropicbird that passed Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 28th (see pages 8-9). Seen by no fewer than a dozen observers, it sounds like this bird performed well indeed, and finder Martin Birch will no doubt be the envy of many.

The first days of August brought with them the first Fea's-type Petrel reports of the season, all from Co Cork. The first flew past Galley Head at 6.20 am on 2nd, with a report from Toe Head, 12.5 miles to the west, some three hours later presumably concerning the same individual. The following day saw fly-bys at Galley at 10.15 am and 2 pm – again, one might assume that these related to the bird seen the previous day.

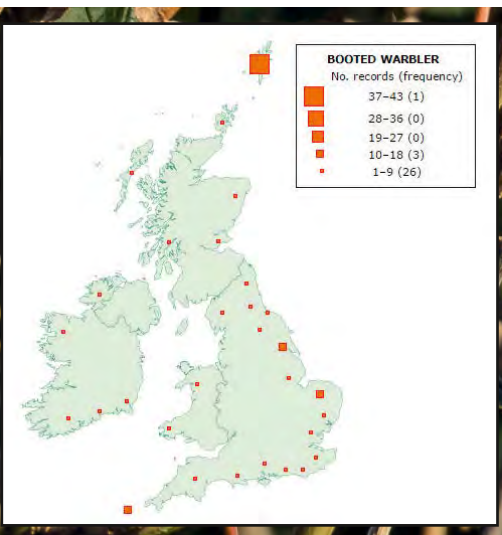
Distances and timings would suggest that the bird past Ballycotton at 11.10 am on 2nd was a different individual.

This was followed by a showy bird from a pelagic off Toe Head, Co Cork, on 9th and a report past Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 5th, but the highlight was surely the brilliantly confiding bird seen from a 'Birder Special' pelagic south-east of St Mary's, Scilly, on 16th (see page 12). For those on board the MV *Sapphire* it was a magic experience indeed, and the images that have since appeared confirm it as the best-photographed definite Fea's Petrel in British waters.

The final day of the month produced the only Barolo Shearwater reports, with records



JOHN MILLER



**Four Booted Warblers were found during the month, but this bird at Gramborough Hill, Norfolk, on 22-23rd was the only one away from the Northern Isles. As can be seen on the inset BirdGuides.com map, Norfolk and Lincolnshire are the best English counties for this regular northern Eurasian vagrant.**



This adult Pacific Golden Plover was seen at Turf Lawn Fields, Co Londonderry, intermittently from 23rd. Remarkably, it was the third individual to be found there in four years.

DEREK CHARLES

past Pendeen, Cornwall, and Strumble Head, Pems.

A decent selection of waders included a Wilson's Phalarope at Par Beach, Cornwall, on 16th and a showy adult Baird's Sandpiper at Seaton Marshes, Devon, on 15th. Another Baird's was reported from Dunnet Bay, Highland, on 24th, while the first Semipalmated Sandpipers of the season were at Inny Strand, Co Kerry, on 19th and Rosscarbery, Co Cork, on 23rd, making autumn 2015 already more productive for the species than 2014, when just one was recorded.

An adult Spotted Sandpiper stayed for an unusually long time at Coate Water CP, Wilts, notching up a 12-day stay after it was discovered on 16th. Another Spotted Sandpiper was on the Teign Estuary, Devon, on 17th, while a Lesser Yellowlegs at Brockholes, Lancs, on 20th could well have been the bird at Conder Estuary for several days from 23rd. A Terek Sandpiper was seen flying over Salthouse, Norfolk, on 24th, while a juvenile Broad-billed Sandpiper was an excellent discovery inland at Scorton Pits, North Yorks, on 26th. An adult Pacific Golden Plover at Myroe Levels, Co Londonderry, was the third

individual seen there in four years.

The Forster's Tern returned to the Co Louth coast on 22nd – a slightly earlier arrival date than usual – and was generally to be found around Soldier's Point. After an adult Whiskered Tern flew past Spurn on 4th, what was possibly the same bird passed Dungeness, Kent, on 6th. An adult Caspian Tern was seen briefly on the scrape at Holland Haven, Essex, on 1st, and a more fleeting bird was at Gore Point, Norfolk, on 9th.

As well as the long-staying bird at Oare Marshes, Kent – last noted on 23rd – the adult Bonaparte's Gull returned to Teignmouth, Devon, on 23rd.

Following the discovery of a juvenile Pallid Harrier at Spiggle, Shetland, on 23rd, that individual was remarkably seen alongside a second juvenile at nearby Hillwell on 30th. Even allowing for the exceptional influx of 2011, this is the first multi-occurrence at a single site.

### Early movers

Three early Thrush Nightingale records included a particularly confiding individual on Fair Isle on 19th, as well as an inland record of a bird trapped and

ringed at Thorne Moors, South Yorks, on 24th which was initially logged as a Nightingale. The third concerned a bird trapped and ringed on the Farne Islands, Northumbs, on 15-16th.

Aquatic Warbler has recently been elevated to rarity status and it certainly lived up to its revised billing. August has traditionally been the month to see the species in Britain, yet just three were recorded: one was on Fair Isle on 15-16th, while the other two were trapped, ringed and never seen again, at Orford Ness, Suffolk, on 9th and Wheldrake Ings, North Yorks, on 12th.

Potentially one of the rarest birds of the month was the Zitting Cisticola reported from Atherington, West Sussex, during the evening of 18th. Despite being seen briefly on a few occasions it could not be found the following morning.

The first Booted Warbler of the autumn was on Fair Isle on 19th, with another on North Ronaldsay following closely on 21st. On the mainland a bird was at Gramborough Hill, Norfolk, on 22-23rd, with Shetland's second of the month at Sumburgh on 22nd.

A Bonelli's warbler was a fantastic find inland near Billinge, Lancs, on 31st, but it could

not be relocated despite being photographed. Other unassigned Bonelli's were on St Agnes, Scilly, on 21st, at Bass Point, Cornwall, on 22nd (considered to be a probable Western) and photographed at East Soar, Devon, on 27th. Confirmed Western Bonelli's Warblers were at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 17th, on St Mary's, Scilly, from 23-27th and at Portland, Dorset, on 22nd and 26th, when it was trapped and ringed.

A Lesser Grey Shrike spent just a day at Lunna, Shetland, on 25th, with another reported at Cromer, Norfolk, three days later. Black-headed Buntings were untwitchable at Nanjizal, Cornwall, on 8th and in Dale of Walls, Shetland, on 24th. The latter site also bagged one of the month's three Arctic Warblers on 24th, the others being at Sands of Forvie, Aberdeenshire, on 19-20th and Scousburgh, Shetland, on 28th. ■

• For full details of all August's sightings, go to [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com). To receive free illustrated weekly sightings summaries and other news, sign up at [bit.ly/BGWeeklyNews](http://bit.ly/BGWeeklyNews).

BIRDCGUIDES



GERRY O'NEILL

The regular Forster's Tern appeared at Soldier's Point, Co Louth, on 22nd. It has returned most years since 10 October 2004 (it wasn't seen in 2005, 2010 and 2013 for reasons unknown), but this is its earliest date.



MIKE TREW

A Spotted Sandpiper lived up to its name in full breeding dress at the unlikely site of Coate Water Park, Wiltshire, on 17th, having been discovered the previous day. It managed to put in a good 12-day innings for local birders.

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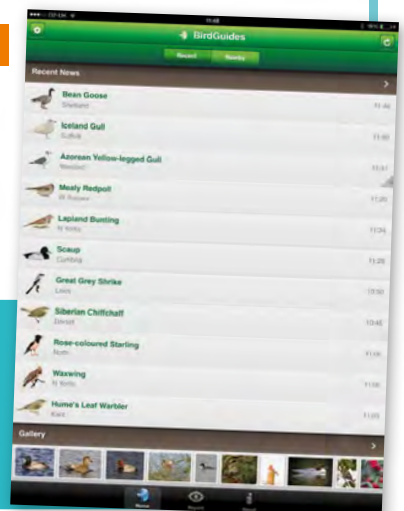
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Scarcities: August 2015

# A fall on land and a peak at sea



Seawatching and arrivals of migrants both picked up during a month when migration truly got into gear, writes **Josh Jones**.



PETER MOORE

A large part of the entire world population of Balearic Shearwater (left) passes the western and southern coasts of Britain and Ireland during autumn, and probably the best place and time to see them is on a Scilly pelagic in August. The species is a localised endemic breeder in the western Mediterranean, but disperses in July. This luckless individual attempted to rest on the sea, but a juvenile Lesser Black-backed Gull had other ideas.

Though there were plenty of talking points throughout the month, it was the occurrence of the best August fall for many years that proved one of the highlights. On 23-24th many thousands of migrants arrived right along the east coast, with Pied Flycatchers the most numerous species – thousands must have turned up, with an apparent peak on 24th that saw single-site counts on the Yorkshire coast of an astonishing minimum of 230 in the Spurn area, as well as 85 around Flamborough Head and 52 at Filey.

Numbers were smaller both to the north and south, with at least 17 at Gibraltar Point, Lincs, and around 30 at East Hills, Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, being some of the better totals elsewhere. On 23rd, at least 40 were on the Isle of May, Fife. Other common migrants were also seen in impressive numbers, with Whinchat, Yellow Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Willow Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher among the most widespread species.

Many of the typical early autumn scarce drift migrants were also well represented, with Wrynecks



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSOFNORTH.COM)

Caspian Gull remains a rarity in the North-West despite its regular presence in the South-East, and consequently this mid-moult first-summer bird proved popular at Ainsdale Beach, Lancashire, on 18th.



PETER MOORE

Great Shearwater is another species that occurs in its greatest numbers in British waters in the South-West Approaches, and excellent views were had once again on Scilly pelagics this August.





MARK SULLIVAN

The first Arctic Warbler of the year was this somewhat cold-toned bird at Sands of Forvie NNR, Aberdeenshire, on 19-20th which blended in well with the lichen-encrusted branches of its chosen tree.

particularly numerous. At least 150 were seen during the final two weeks of the month, with single-site counts including seven at Gibraltar Point on 25th and threes at Spurn on 24-25th, Buckton, East Yorks, on 23rd and Filey on 20th. After the initial arrival, birds began to filter through into the country's interior, and a good number of co-operative inland individuals delighted local birders in the final week of August.

Icterine Warblers began to arrive in the third week of the month, with one of the harbingers a particularly

showy bird in the dunes at Burnham Overy, Norfolk, from 14-17th. A conservative minimum of 80 birds were recorded throughout the month, with peaks of five on Isle of May on 23rd and Fair Isle on 26th. Most individuals were located on the east coast between East Yorkshire and Aberdeenshire, as well as on Shetland.

Barred Warblers were a little scarcer, with at least 50 recorded after the first arrived at Spurn on 14th. There was again a peak around the dates of the aforementioned fall, with a high



NICK APPLETON

Up to 54 Icterine Warblers were seen during the month, with a notable surge in the last week. This bird near the boardwalk at Burnham Overy, Norfolk, on 14th was one of the first to arrive.

count of four on Fair Isle and several seen in the Spurn area.

Red-backed Shrike numbers increased towards the end of the month following the first – a female – at Bowers Marsh, Essex, from 10th. Totals were steady if unspectacular, with the highest count of three on Fair Isle at the very end of the month, and several twos, many of which were on the Shetland archipelago.

The first Greenish Warbler was at Filey on 14th, with two arriving at Holy Island, Northumbs, the following day. A further nine were

then recorded between Unst, Shetland, and Spurn from 19-25th, but a lack of suitable conditions ensured that just one was seen in the final week – on North Ronaldsay on 28th.

### Drift migrants down

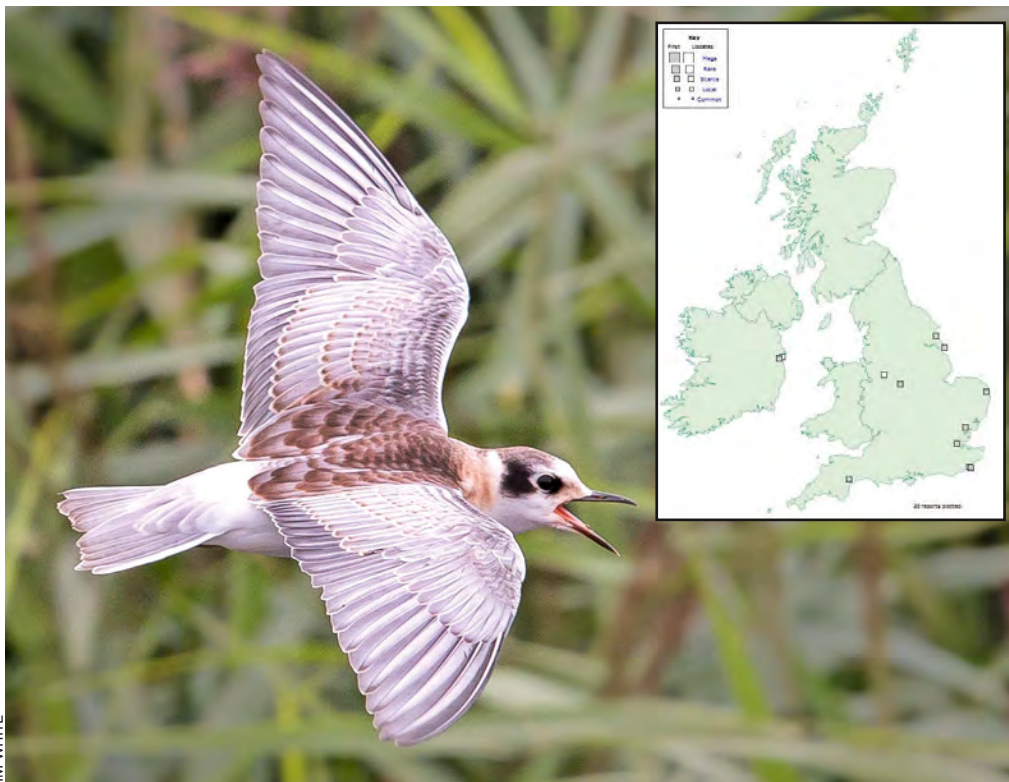
Ever scarcer, Ortolan Buntings were limited to just six individuals, and the only one to linger was at Spurn on 26-27th. A similar number of Marsh Warblers included an adult bearing a French ring trapped at Tring Reservoirs, Herts, on 2nd.

The 10 or so Common Rosefinches were seen exclusively in the Northern Isles, with a peak of two at Skaw, Unst, on 20th. What was presumably a single European Serin was seen sporadically at Landguard, Suffolk, to 15th. Also from climes further south came three juvenile Woodchat Shrikes: on St Mary's, Scilly, on 19th, inland at Blakehill Farm, Wilts, on 28-29th and at Kynance Cove, Cornwall, on 30th.

Of the 10 Melodious Warblers recorded, a wayward individual as far north as Norwick, Unst, from 25-27th was the clear highlight. Altogether more typical records saw four in Dorset (including two on Portland), as well as further south coast records from East Sussex and Cornwall.

The third and fourth weeks of August were excellent for Wood Sandpipers. Many east coast sites reported birds either arriving 'in-off' or migrating along the coast, while some spectacular counts on 23rd were worthy of southern Europe, and included 34 at Seaton Marshes, Devon, and 22 at Pennington Marshes, Hants.

At the end of the month a juvenile European Bee-eater was



TIM WHITE

White-winged Black Tern has been seen throughout the summer in small numbers, but August has produced the most so far, with up to nine birds being reported. All were confined to England bar a brief bird in Dublin, and most were on the eastern side, as can be seen on the inset BirdGuides.com map. This very fresh and bright juvenile showed well at Exminster Marshes RSPB, Devon, from 14-16th.

seen at the nest hole entrance near Brampton, Cumbria, and it successfully fledged in the first few days September. Elsewhere it was a good month for sightings, with reports from around 20 widely spread sites. Records included up to seven at Veensgarth, Shetland, from 26-28th, a single bird on North Ronaldsay on 12th and four over Deal, Kent, on 5th.

Seawatching typically picked up throughout August, with numbers and species diversity increasing as the month progressed. Large shearwater numbers peaked late in the month, with Galley Head, Co Cork, logging the highest day tallies of the year on 26th, when 383 Cory's and 326 Great Shearwaters passed by. Daily Cory's Shearwater totals past Porthgwarra, Cornwall, included a minimum of 130 on 25th, 57 on 26th, 36 on 27th and a solid 70 on 29th, with 53 also past Kynance Cove on 26th. At least 32 Great Shearwaters passed Porthgwarra on 25th.

It's been another slow year for Wilson's Storm-petrel records and the Scilly pelagics only notched their first records of the season with singles daily from 14-16th. Prior to this, up to three had been seen from a pelagic off Toe Head, Co Cork, on 9th. Also in Cork waters, one was off Brow Head on 12th and two were seen from pelagics out of Baltimore on 15th and 29th. Further Scilly records included two on 20th and singles on 24th and 27th.

A small but exciting influx of juvenile Red-footed Falcons came on 24th. The first to be found was at Kingsbarns, Fife, and was quickly followed by two at separate

sites in the Spurn area that day, one of which lingered for a few days in the Kilnsea/Easington area. What was quite possibly one of these then flew south at Donna Nook, Lincs, on 25th, and there was also a first-summer male at Newtonhill, Aberdeenshire, that day. After spending the best part of five weeks in Staffordshire, the first-summer male relocated to near Tongue End, Lincs, on 12th, where it remained into early September.

### Pectorals return

Among the returning waders were around 30 Pectoral Sandpipers, the first juveniles of which began to show up from 20th. Peak counts of two were noted at Tacumshin, Co Wexford, on 22nd and Muckrush, Co Galway, on 24th. Eight White-rumped Sandpipers were seen across Britain and Ireland, all before 20th and including two records from Norfolk. Eight sites claimed 13 Temminck's Stints, with peaks of four at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 20th and up to three at Monk's House Pool, Seahouses, Northumbs, from 24th. Just four Red-necked Phalaropes were seen, and none stayed put.

Post-breeding dispersal saw Caspian, Yellow-legged and Mediterranean Gulls continue to spread north and west throughout August. An amazing count of at least 1,300 'Meds' was made at Breydon Water, Norfolk, on 14th, while at least 920 were at Folkestone Warren, Kent, on 12th and 803 at Fishbourne Creek, West Sussex, on 11th. A dozen Ring-billed Gulls included a number of returning adults, but a



NEIL HUGHES

**Bluethroat continues to decline inexplicably as a migrant in Britain, as BirdLife reports no notable changes in its world population. This skulking white-spotted bird was at Winterton Dunes, Norfolk, on 30th.**

first-summer was a significant find in Preston, Lancs, on 2nd and it showed well throughout.

An early juvenile White-winged Black Tern turned up at Westport Lake, Staffs, on 8th, with what was apparently the same bird at Beacon Ponds, East Yorks, the following day. At least six others were then seen, including up to two at Dungeness, Kent, late on.

A fantastic 19 Great Egrets were seen at Shapwick Heath, Somerset, on 19th, while their more widespread colonisation looks imminent – several twos and threes were seen throughout England, with five reported in Lancashire on 27th. The first

meaningful arrival of Cattle Egrets in some years took place late in the month, when an amazing flock of 22 was discovered at Coward's Marsh, Dorset, on 30th, though they quickly dispersed (see pages 10-11). Two Suffolk Purple Herons included a juvenile rescued from a boat at sea and successfully released at Carlton Marshes (another juvenile was seen in Somerset), an adult Night Heron showed well at times in West Yorkshire from 18th, and new Glossy Ibises were seen in East Yorkshire and the Outer Hebrides. ■

**BIRDBUIDES** 



MARTIN GOODEY



JAMES WILD

**Above left:** Pectoral Sandpipers numbered around 30 during the month, and included this bird at Porth Hellick Pool, St Mary's, Scilly, on 3rd. **Above right:** Wryneck is often viewed as a solitary species, and it is unusual to see them associating with each other. However, this August's fall conditions produced these three birds posed together for one lucky photographer at Carr Naze, Filey, North Yorkshire, on 28th.



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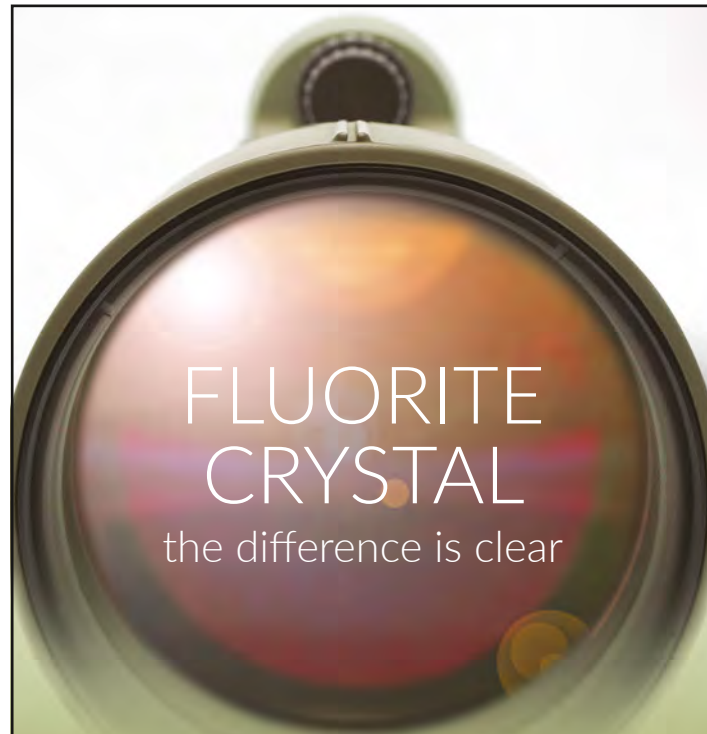
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Western Palearctic: August 2015

# The Azores score

**Josh Jones reviews a month where the North Atlantic islands – and The Azores in particular – delivered the best birds in the region.**



This adult Red-footed Booby at Lajes de Pico, Azores, on 3 August led to the retraction of a Masked Booby record from July, as the observer of the latter couldn't exclude the possibility of it being the same bird.

**Y**ellow Warbler is notorious for being one of the earliest-occurring Nearctic warblers on this side of the Atlantic, but the occurrence of a male at Lugar de Baixo, Madeira, on 20-21st was a surprise to say the least. It appears to have been the highlight of a small influx of North American vagrants in the region in the second half of the month, with a juvenile Least Sandpiper on Terceira, Azores, on 21st and a Solitary Sandpiper on São Miguel, Azores, on 26-27th being the

highlights of a decent selection of early shorebirds. This influx was also felt further east with an extraordinarily early juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper in Niedersachsen, Germany, from 9th; to put that into context, this is 11 days earlier than any juvenile ever recorded in Britain and Ireland.

Also in the Azores, a Swinhoe's Storm-petrel seen at the Bank of Fortune, off Graciosa, on 27th was the fifth sighting there in four years. Late news of an adult Red-footed Booby photographed off Lajes do Pico on 3rd has led to the retraction

of the Masked Booby report from the same site in early July – the initial observer has indicated that it could well be the same bird involved in both reports, meaning that it had perhaps been around for at least a month. The presence of a juvenile Sooty Tern off Ilheu da Praia, Graciosa, on 25th appears to suggest that the only pair of this species to breed in the region had been successful for the second year running.

One of the stories of the month was the adult Black-browed Albatross which visited Agger Tange on Denmark's west coast

for no fewer than nine of the first 17 days of the month, and could often be found mixing with the local Mute Swans. Its final visit on 17th proved to be highly dramatic: the albatross was the subject of repeated attacks by a pair of White-tailed Eagles, with direct contact observed on several occasions. Fortunately it survived this bout, and after gathering its senses on the lake flew out to sea, and hasn't returned since!

Israel's third or fourth Saunders's Tern was a cryptic find at Eilat North Beach on 18th, while the Pink-backed Pelican



An unexpectedly early 'Yank' in the region was this Yellow Warbler at Lugar de Baixo, Madeira, on 20 August. It highlights the possibility that the island is underwatched for vagrants.



Semipalmated Sandpiper (left) and Least Sandpiper juveniles foraged in tandem at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, Azores, on 21st, part of a minor arrival of Yank waders as the first waves of migration passed the American east coast.

PEDRO MADRUGA

TORA OLSEN



RICHARD BONSER

**Above:** a juvenile Sooty Tern photographed off Ilheu da Praia, Graciosa, Azores, on 24 August demonstrates that the species almost certainly bred again in the archipelago for the second year running.

**Right:** this dark-morph Eleonora's Falcon shared the air with one of the local Black Kites at Hoher Fläming, Brandenburg, Germany, on 21st, and was one of up to three birds in the country in an exceptional influx.

**Below right:** what will be the eighth Sharp-tailed Sandpiper for The Netherlands if accepted was at Camperduin, Noord-Holland, on 9 September. The bird was still in its distinctive adult plumage.

remained near Ein Harod for much of August and the Bateleur was relocated at Kedma mid-month after a few weeks' absence.

A female Lesser Sand Plover, seemingly from the *atrifrons* group, was photographed at Janubio salt pans, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, on 7th.

A juvenile Black-winged Kite present to the south-west of Nijmegen, The Netherlands, from 3-5th was perhaps the same bird as later seen at Hargimont, Luxembourg, on 20th. Also in the country was a Griffon Vulture, which toured the islands of Vlieland and Texel early on, tantalising British birders.

Late on in the month a Pacific Swift was seen over Helsingborg, Sweden, on 29th and the first Audouin's Gull for Georgia was at Chorokhi Delta on 28th. Also that day, raptor counting produced a male Oriental Honey Buzzard at Batumi.

Other records included the Czech Republic's first Sykes's Warbler on 19th, while Germany's first twitchable Lesser Kestrel

in Niedersachsen from 22nd roughly coincided with up to three Eleonora's Falcons seen across that country. The Hooded Merganser was still in south-west Iceland on 2nd, Poland's seventh Dalmatian Pelican was near Bydgoszcz on 14th, a Western Reef Egret was reported near Verona, Italy, on 17th and a Demoiselle Crane was at Porto Lagos, Greece, on 18th. ■

**BIRDBUIDES** 



WOLFGANG PÜSCHEL



ARNOLD VAN DEN BERG

The first breeding record of White-cheeked Tern in Israel involved this bird with two eggs in Eilat, though it is believed that the attempt ultimately failed, as no fledglings were seen.

NITZAN SEGEV



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## Where to watch birds



- 1** St Mary's and Tresco, Scilly. Pages 25-27
- 2** Burton Mere Wetlands, Cheshire. Page 28
- 3** Aberdeen to Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire. Page 29
- 4** Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland. Page 30
- 5** Ouessant, France. Page 31

### MORE OCTOBER SITES

- Prawle Point, Devon: [bit.ly/bw256PrawlePoint](http://bit.ly/bw256PrawlePoint)
- Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire: [bit.ly/bw256CovenhamRes](http://bit.ly/bw256CovenhamRes)
- Stronsay, Orkney: [bit.ly/bw256Stronsay](http://bit.ly/bw256Stronsay)
- Redcar to Saltburn, North Yorkshire: [bit.ly/bw244RedcarSaltburn](http://bit.ly/bw244RedcarSaltburn)
- Cliffe Pools, Kent: [bit.ly/bw244CliffePools](http://bit.ly/bw244CliffePools)
- Aberlady Bay, East Lothian: [bit.ly/bw244AberladyBay](http://bit.ly/bw244AberladyBay)
- Kilcummin Head, Co Mayo: [bit.ly/bw244KilcumminHead](http://bit.ly/bw244KilcumminHead)
- Reykjanes Peninsula, Iceland: [bit.ly/bw232ReykjanesPeninsula](http://bit.ly/bw232ReykjanesPeninsula)
- Reculver, Kent: [bit.ly/bw232Reculver](http://bit.ly/bw232Reculver)
- North York Moors, Yorkshire: [bit.ly/bw232NorthYorkMoors](http://bit.ly/bw232NorthYorkMoors)



# 1 SITE OF THE MONTH ST MARY'S AND TRESCO

October on Scilly has something of a legendary reputation among birders. **Kris Webb** identifies some top hot-spots on two key islands to turn up your own rarity, including the possibility of some stunning North American vagrants.



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

With the majority of British records coming from Scilly, the islands are a good bet in October for Red-eyed Vireo. Head to the Garrison, St Mary's, for the chance to find your own.

If you arrive on Scilly by plane, you have a chance of ticking off **Dotterel, American Golden Plover** and **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** before you've even reached the terminal building. The airfield can be very productive and you can usually see **Short-toed Lark, Richard's Pipit** and **Snow and Lapland Buntings** feeding along the edges of the runways. Scarcer species have included Red-throated and Blyth's

Pipits, while one that took everyone by surprise was a Sociable Lapwing that turned up in 2008.

With similar short turf, the golf course less than a mile away from the airfield also attracts scarce pipits, buntings and larks. Dotterel and Buff-breasted Sandpiper have been seen feeding together at very close range. In 2004 a Cream-coloured Courser spent three weeks on Scilly. First found on St Agnes, before moving to St Martin's, it finally

### USEFUL CONTACTS

#### Travel information and timetables

- **Traveline:** 0871 200 2233 or [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info).
- **Traveline Scotland:** 0871 200 2233 or [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com).
- **Traveline Cymru:** 0871 200 2233 or [www.traveline-cymru.info](http://www.traveline-cymru.info)

- **Stagecoach Bus:** [www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com).
- **Arriva Bus:** 0844 800 4411 or [www.arrivabus.co.uk](http://www.arrivabus.co.uk).
- **National Rail:** 0845 748 4950 or [www.nationalrail.com](http://www.nationalrail.com).
- **Sustrans:** 0117 926 8893 or [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk).

#### National bird news

**BirdGuides.com:** for all bird news and to report your own sightings, call 0333 577 2473, email [sightings@birdguides.com](mailto:sightings@birdguides.com) or visit [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com).

#### Mapping

Access fully interactive and annotated Google maps for all

itineraries at [bit.ly/BWMaps](http://bit.ly/BWMaps).

#### Further information

- **County bird recorders:** [www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/bird-recording/county-bird-recorders](http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/bird-recording/county-bird-recorders).
- **Birdwatch Bookshop:** for discounted birding books see [www.birdwatch.co.uk/store](http://www.birdwatch.co.uk/store).

There are just 56 accepted records of Blackpoll Warbler in Britain and Ireland, and both St Mary's and Tresco have pulled in several birds. The pool at Porth Hellick (main photo) could offer a variety of wildfowl.



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

settled down on the golf course, but was never seen feeding and unfortunately died in my own hands.

You really can't predict what is going to turn up in October on Scilly. That is the beauty of these islands, which lie 28 miles off south-west Cornwall in the Atlantic. One minute you can be looking at a Siberian Thrush on Gugh, when a Short-toed Eagle flies overhead, as happened in 1999. Shortly before the excitement of ticking off those two megas – the eagle was also a first for Britain – birders had been watching another major rarity in the form of a White's Thrush which had been found on St Agnes.

Other amazing occurrences have included Cliff Swallow and Chimney Swift feeding together over Buzza Tower in 2001, while in a single day back in 1985, you could have seen Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Myrtle Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo on St Mary's.

Wind direction and time of the month

often don't matter, as anything can turn up. However, a fast-moving depression coming across the Atlantic could mean that visiting birders are in for treat.

**Red-eyed Vireos** turn up almost every year, with maybe two or three birds at a time, and **Blackpoll Warblers** have become more regular again in recent years. A visit to Scilly in September or October offers a great chance of a self-found rarity or even a mega.

### St Mary's

Start at the Garrison, St Mary's, with the football field here surrounded by a pine belt to the north-west **1**. The trees can hold a variety of common migrants, as well as **Barred**, **Subalpine** and **Blyth's Reed Warblers**; in 1992 a Northern Parula gave crippling views.

On the east side **2** of the Garrison are elms and sycamores which have harboured **Wood**, **Icterine**, **Pallas's** and **Blackpoll Warblers**, **Baltimore Oriole** and, on many occasions, **Red-eyed Vireo**, with two together in one

year. A male Black-and-white Warbler showed off in the lower branches in 1996, while at the same time there was a female on Tresco. But perhaps the most famous find was Britain's first and only accepted Green Warbler, discovered here in 1983.

Porth Hellick and the surrounding area **3** offers a rich mix of habitats. The main centre of attention is the pool, with its two hides where ducks can include **Garganey**, **Ring-necked Duck** and **Blue-winged Teal**. If there is a muddy margin, then feeding with the **Greenshank** will be **Jack Snipe**, sometimes in good numbers, and you might also get **Pectoral Sandpiper** or **Lesser Yellowlegs**; **Long-billed Dowitcher** and **Solitary Sandpiper** have also occurred.

**Spotted Crane** is regular, while in 1991 there was a Sora and in 2003 a Little Crane showed briefly before being seen well on a tiny pool at nearby Carn Friers. The latter site consists of farm fields bordered with tallows and elms. **Siberian Chiffchaff**, **Radde's** and **Barred Warblers** and **Little** and **Rustic Buntings** have all turned up here.

Lower Moors **4** has a smaller pool and can produce more or less the same species as Porth Hellick. Jack Snipe is a specialty, with amazing views from in front of the two hides. Since the first accepted record in 1998, this site has seen seven Wilson's Snipe, with the last in 2011.

### Tresco

A visit to Tresco is well worth the effort. The two areas to check out are the Great **5** and Abbey **6** Pools. These are the places to be for American ducks and waders, with Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, American Black Duck, American Wigeon and the only Scilly record of Lesser Scaup, a drake in 1999. Rare waders have included Long-billed Dowitcher and Semipalmated, Least, White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers; don't be surprised to see Pectoral Sandpiper, too. Away from the pools,





The short turf of the airfield on St Mary's can be productive, with this American Golden Plover (main photo) seen there in October 2010. Scarcities such as Subalpine Warbler (inset) sometimes appear in the trees bordering the north-west side of the football pitch at Garrison.



KRIS WEBB



a Sykes's Warbler found in 2012 at the north-eastern end of the island and a Pechora Pipit at Borough Farm in 1994 are the only Scilly records of these species.

**Yellow-browed Warbler, Firecrest and Wryneck** can be found anywhere on the islands, sometimes in good numbers. **Ortolan Bunting** and **Red-backed** and **Woodchat Shrikes** are also possible.

If time permits, the other islands – St Agnes, Bryher and St Martin's – are also worth visiting. As well as turning up many of the species already mentioned, they have been graced by major rarities such as Northern Waterthrush, Pied and Isabelline Wheatears, Hermit, Grey-cheeked, Swainson's, Siberian and White's Thrushes, and Eastern Olivaceous, Booted and Dusky Warblers. The only Scilly records of Yellow-browed Bunting and Semipalmated Plover were both on St Agnes.

STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

## i VISITOR INFORMATION

### READS



**Where to Watch Birds in Devon and Cornwall** by David Norman and Vic Tucker (Christopher Helm, fifth edition, £18.99) – order from £16.99 on page 77.

### > Sites and access

All sites offer free public access. St Mary's is the transport hub for the islands. For details of air and sea travel to the island, call Isles of Scilly Travel on 01736 334220 or visit [www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk](http://www.islesofscilly-travel.co.uk). For crossings to Tresco and other islands, contact Tresco Boat Services on 01720 423373 or visit [www.tresco.co.uk/arriving/tresco-boats](http://www.tresco.co.uk/arriving/tresco-boats). This itinerary isn't suitable for those in wheelchairs.

### > Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer 101 and Landranger 203.

### > Web resources

- [www.visitislesofscilly.com](http://www.visitislesofscilly.com) for a wealth of information on visiting the islands.
- [www.scilly-birding.co.uk](http://www.scilly-birding.co.uk) for the Isles of Scilly Bird Group, with local sightings.
- Follow on Twitter: @ScillyWildlife, @IOSTravel, @ISBG2014 and @visitIOS.



See [bit.ly/BWMaps](http://bit.ly/BWMaps) for links to the fully annotated Google maps.

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# 2

## BURTON MERE WETLANDS

By Daniel Trotman

### Where and why

Burton Mere Wetlands is tucked away in the shadows of Burton village, at the south-west corner of the Wirral peninsula. Situated on the landward side of the Borderlands railway, the site offers a mosaic of freshwater wetland habitats including lowland wet grassland, reedbed, shallow scrapes and deeper lagoons, along with smaller areas of woodland and farmland. New visitor facilities four years ago opened up panoramic views of the wetlands and extensive trails, establishing it as a focal point of the Dee Estuary RSPB reserve. Widely renowned for its impressive haul of migrant waders, recent highlights include Red-necked Phalarope (three records since June 2014), Black-winged Pratincole and Long-billed Dowitcher, along with regular scarce sandpiper species – Pectoral, Wood and Curlew – plus Little and Temminck's Stints.

### Route planner

Burton Mere Wetlands is off the A540 (Chester High Road) and just 10 minutes from the M56. The impressive Reception Hide <sup>1</sup> is the obvious place to start. Overlooking the main scrape, the majority of waders are picked up here at some point during their stay. Flocks of **Northern Lapwing**, **Black-tailed Godwit** and **Common Redshank** grace the water, with the smaller sandpiper species requiring more patience to locate.

It may be beneficial to take the short walk to the Bunker Screen for similar views of the scrape only without the glazed windows,



DAVID KJAER (WWW.DAVIDKJAER.COM)

Impressive flocks of Black-tailed Godwit – as well as other waders – can be seen from Reception Hide, overlooking the main scrape.

allowing extra clarity for the finer details. Counts of up to nine **Little Ringed Plovers** from here this summer suggest improving breeding success, and there's a slim chance of a late southbound **Avocet**, though the local breeders have usually left by August.

Head back through Reception Hide and take the third-of-a-mile walk, bordering deep ponds, deciduous woodland and reedbed, to Marsh Covert Hide <sup>2</sup>. From here, the Long-billed Dowitcher showed well among Black-tailed Godwits in 2013, but more commonly Little Ringed Plover, **Greenshank**, **Common Snipe** and the occasional **Jack Snipe** skirt

the water fringes.

Past this hide, the walk rises briefly along the Farm and Fen Trail, to an elevated spot offering distant views of the wet grassland where the Black-winged Pratincole was found in 2012.

Beyond here, head to Inner Marsh Farm Hide <sup>3</sup>, the locally known name of this site since opening in 1992. This is perhaps still the birders' favourite spot on the reserve, and for good reason. It holds all the usual suspects and was the favoured location of the long-staying Red-necked Phalarope last September, with standing room only on much of its 17-day stay, especially when

accompanied by the Pectoral Sandpiper and, a reserve first, a vagrant Cattle Egret.

A visit coinciding with a spring tide can see a greater array of waders across the site, with small flocks of **Dunlin**, **Knot** and **Eurasian Curlew** pushed in to roost away from the flooded marshes, along with increased numbers of Common Redshank and godwits.

If you're here until dusk, the **Little Egret** roost is well worth hanging on for, with Britain's third-largest colony making its home in the Marsh Covert woodland on the north edge of the site. ■



## VISITOR INFORMATION

### READS



**Birds in Cheshire and Wirral** by David Norman (Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society). Order from [www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org](http://www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org).

### Sites and access

The site is open daily from 9 am; Reception Hide is open 9.30 am–5 pm. Parking is free and reserve entry is free to RSPB members, otherwise adults £4. Half of the site is fully accessible, including Reception and Marsh Covert Hides and connecting trails, plus an accessible toilet. There are regular train services from Neston and Hooton, linking to Liverpool and Chester. The nearest bus service (Arriva 487) drops at Ness Botanic Gardens, 1.5 miles from the reserve entrance.

### Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer 266 and Landranger 117.

### Web resources

- [www.rspb.org.uk/burtonmerewetlands](http://www.rspb.org.uk/burtonmerewetlands) for more information about the reserve.
- [www.deeestuary.co.uk](http://www.deeestuary.co.uk) for sightings and news.
- [www.cawos.org](http://www.cawos.org) for the Cheshire and Wirral Ornithological Society.
- Follow on Twitter: @RSPB\_BurtonMere.



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## ABERDEEN TO STONEHAVEN

By Mark Lewis

## Where and why

Parts of the coastline between Aberdeen and Stonehaven are seriously underwatched and offer excellent opportunities to find your own migrants, with some real potential for rarities. There should be goose flocks to check through as well, and the day can end with some excellent fish and chips in Stonehaven.

## Route planner

Start the day in Aberdeen, and head south along the coast road that runs from Nigg Bay towards Cove. The stretch between Doonies Farm **1** and the north side of Cove has been planted up with a series of shelter belts that should harbour migrants after the right conditions. Park at NJ 960024 and explore. **Greenish Warbler** has been found around here before, as well as other scarcities – and you're unlikely to bump into any other birders!

South of here, Cove community woodland (NJ 946002) **2** was very well covered in the past, and has turned up some real quality in the form of **Collared Flycatcher** and **Hume's Warbler**. You can access along the footpaths from Cove Crescent and Cove Road. Check the trees along the footpaths and especially the crescent of deciduous trees near the dam – these areas have held **Barred Warbler**, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** and **Siberian Chiffchaff**.

Nearby, Rigifa Pool (NO 941998) is well worth a look for waders and wildfowl. If water levels are low, Marywell Pool (NO 932995) may also be worth

Check the trees along the footpaths in Cove, a village just south of Aberdeen, for scarcities such as Red-breasted Flycatcher.

MARK LEWIS



checking out. The fields in this area can be good for flocks of geese, and these should be checked for **Tundra Bean** and **White-fronted Geese**. South along the coast road, you'll come to the first of several small villages, whose associated gardens and coppices must get birds during the right conditions. Findon (NO 937975) **3** is well worth a stop and could well reward full exploration. Old Portlethen is also brimming with potential, and has hosted Barred and **Yellow-browed Warblers** in recent years. For those who like a stop at lunchtime, you could do a lot worse than The Neuk in Old Portlethen.

From here, head further south towards Newtonhill **4**. Now we're (very briefly!) back on the birding map, as Newtonhill

gets regular coverage and as a result has its fair share of good birds. Back in the 'good old days' it hosted a **Booted Warbler**, and it's had **Pallas's Warbler** and other scarcities such as **Corncrake** since. The gully running inland along the north side of the town looks particularly good.

Once again it's time to venture off the radar and into Muchalls (NO 902922) **5**, the next village south of Newtonhill. The village has as much potential as anywhere to the north, and to the south, the area along the Burn of Muchalls (NO 899912) looks mouthwatering. This spot has held multiple Hume's Warblers and probably only gets checked a couple of times each autumn.

We're now approaching the

southern end of the route at Stonehaven. Permutie Bay (NO 889883) **6** has attracted some of the more regular scarcities in recent years, and also **Siberian Stonechat**. This area, along with other likely looking sites around the golf course, and Cowie village should be rewarding in good conditions.

Stonehaven **7** would be an excellent place to end your day. It has several good pubs and restaurants if you need to refuel after a long day's migrant hunting. If you have time, though, Kineff old church is a lovely spot which is also well worth a look.

With a bit of weather-related good fortune, you could have a seriously good day out along this stretch of the coast, and barely see another birder. ■



## VISITOR INFORMATION

## READS



- **Best Birdwatching Sites in the Scottish Highlands** by Gordon Hamlett (Buckingham Press, £18.97) – order from £16.95 on page 77.
- **Birding Guide to North-East Scotland** by Mark Sullivan and Ian Francis (£7.50 plus £2 p&p, available via [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/aberdeen](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/aberdeen)).

## ► Sites and access

All sites offer free public access. A car is essential to cover this itinerary in full, but many of the sites would be accessible via the number 7 Stagecoach bus from Union Square in Aberdeen. There are train stations at Aberdeen and Stonehaven. Not all of this itinerary is suitable for wheelchair users, though many of the villages have flat, paved footpaths.

## ► Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorers 406 and 396 and Landrangers 38 and 45.

## ► Web resources

- [www.rspb.org.uk/groups/aberdeen](http://www.rspb.org.uk/groups/aberdeen) for the local RSPB group.
- [www.the-soc.org.uk](http://www.the-soc.org.uk) for the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.
- Follow on Twitter: @ScottishBirding.



See [bit.ly/BWMaps](http://bit.ly/BWMaps) for links to fully annotated Google maps

## 4

## NEWBIGGIN-BY-THE-SEA

By Stef McElwee

### Where and why

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is a small coastal town in south-east Northumberland, lying at the southern tip of Druridge Bay. It is a classic east coast headland with huge potential for discovering a variety of common migrants, with the chance of scarcer species and true rarities, both on land or at sea. It lacks large areas of habitat, consisting of a few square miles of rocky headland and foreshore, a few isolated patches of trees and remnants of coastal heath and sand dune systems.

### Route planner

Begin at dawn with a seawatch at Church Point **1**. Drive through the village to the northern end and park at Church Point public car park. Walk around the headland behind St Bartholomew's Church to a small brick structure in front of Church Point caravan site.

Look out for southward movements of **Eurasian Wigeon**, **Northern Pintail**, **Eurasian Teal** and **Common Scoter**, as well as regular double-figure counts of **Red-throated Divers**. If winds are from a northerly direction, you can witness spectacular movements of **Little Auk**, as well as good late movements of **Pomarine Skua** and **Grey Phalarope**.

Once you've had your fill of seabirds, it is time to move on to check the seaward side of the golf course and the rocky foreshore up to Beacon Point **2**. Walk north along the cliff edge, skirting the caravan site, and continue

for a mile to Beacon Point. This path should yield **Rock Pipit** and **Skylark**, as well as occasional **Snow** and **Lapland Buntings**.

The next port of call is Ash Lagoon Bank **3** and remnant heath on the western edge of the golf course. Cross the fairway – giving way to golfers – until you reach the isolated bushes and small trees on the steep banks of the Alcan Ash Lagoons. Scan these bushes for thrushes, as well as the occasional **Ring Ouzel** or **Yellow-browed Warbler**. The surrounding gorse is good for **European Stonechat** and has provided October records of **Wryneck**, **Red-backed Shrike** and most notably **Red-flanked Bluetail** (2010) in the past.

The middle part of the morning should be spent on the 'Mound' (NZ 310886) **4**. This small patch of trees and bushes lies a quarter of a mile back from the north beach bordering the East Lea housing estate. It can be easily

located by walking south along the Ash Lagoon Bank to an obvious raised area of trees and bushes.

The secret to the site's success is its isolation – it acts as a magnet to incoming passerines in murky autumnal weather. This is a key spot to look for scarcer warblers. Among the thrushes, **Goldcrests** and **Common Chiffchaffs** there is an excellent chance of discovering Yellow-browed or **Pallas's Warblers**. The Mound has also hosted Radde's, Dusky and Hume's Warblers in the past.

Early afternoon sees a change of location to Woodhorn village **5** and churchyard on the outer edge of Newbiggin. Woodhorn can be located by driving out of Newbiggin on the A197 Woodhorn Road, where a small church and mature graveyard are located. Park in the small car park in the churchyard to investigate this rarity hot-spot.

The most notable areas to explore are the sheltered hedge

and the Sycamores behind the church. The hedge acts as a refuge for migrants moving inland, and can heave with thrushes, Robins, **Blackcaps**, Goldcrests and **Firecrests** following easterly winds. This hedge received national recognition in October 1999 following the discovery of Britain's second Black-faced Bunting there. Other notable October birds have included Western Bonelli's Warbler and Olive-backed Pipit.

Keep walking along the hedge to reach the subsidence pond known as Woodhorn Flash (NZ 299887). This is an excellent site for **Mediterranean Gulls**, which come to bathe from the nearby village. Commoner waterbirds can be expected, while October sees the occasional **Whooper Swan** and **Pink-footed Goose** flock drop in to feed and bathe. The ponds at Woodhorn also now often host **Little Egret** due to its continued northward march. ■

A seawatch at Church Point could produce double-figure counts of Red-throated Diver.



JOHN ANDERSON



## VISITOR INFORMATION

### READS



**Where to Watch Birds in Britain** by Simon Harrap and Nigel Redman (second edition, Christopher Helm, £19.99) – order for £18.99 on page 77.

### Sites and access

There is free public access to all sites. Parking is free in Woodhorn churchyard or the Church Point car park, where basic toilet facilities are available at the entrance. The nearest train station is at Pegswood. Arriva Bus operates services in the area; the X31 runs between Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Newcastle and 35 and 35a both run from Pegswood to Newbiggin. This itinerary is not suitable for wheelchair users.

### Maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer 325 and Landranger 81.

### Web resources

- [www.newbigginbythesea.co.uk/birds.htm](http://www.newbigginbythesea.co.uk/birds.htm) for some site information.
- [www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com) for places to stay.
- [www.ntbc.org.uk](http://www.ntbc.org.uk) for the Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club, with sightings and news.
- Follow on Twitter: @NTBirdClub.



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## 5 OUESSANT

By Mark Lewis

### Where and why

Ouessant has a long track record for turning up mouth-watering rarities from both east and west – for example, last year's Chestnut Bunting, or the Cliff Swallow in 2012 – as well as being a reliable site to catch up with the more regular scarcities, the occasional American wader and large numbers of common migrants. The ferry crossing to the island also has potential for some interesting seabirds.

### Route planner

This route is based on the idea of a day trip to Ouessant from Brest, and as such is something of a whistle-stop tour designed to get you back to the ferry in time. There are many other parts of the island that deserve attention, and you could do a lot worse than just exploring and birding as you go.

As well as migrant passerines, look out for resident **Chough** and **Dartford Warbler**, and keep an eye out for **Marsh Harrier** overhead. **Water Rail** can be encountered anywhere, but is heard a lot more often than seen. **Peregrine Falcon**, **Merlin** and **Hen Harrier** can also be picked up anywhere, and you should always keep an ear skyward for fly-over pipits, buntings and waders.

The ferry to the island departs Brest at 8.20 am (look out for **Mediterranean Gull**), stopping at Le Conquet and Molene (scan here for Peregrine and waders), and arrives at Port du Stiff on Ouessant by 11 am. **Balearic Shearwater** and **Common Scoter** are often seen from the crossing ①, along with a variety of other seabirds,

as well as Bottlenose Dolphin.

On arrival, visit one of the cycle hire stalls at the terminal and get on your bike. It should take about 20 minutes to get to the west end of the island to the first sites, near the Creac'h lighthouse ②. Explore the cover around the wooden windmill, near the chapel and the old observatory. Here there will be common migrants, along with a great chance of scarcer birds such as **Yellow-browed**

**Warbler** or **Firecrest**, and maybe something rarer, too. The more open areas and brambles will hold chats, pipits, buntings and maybe the odd **Black Redstart** or **Wryneck**. Bird here until about 1.30 pm.

From here, head back towards Lampaul ③ to pick up some lunch. Check the church tower for **Rose-coloured Starling**, and give the cemetery cover a good check – it has an excellent track record

for rarities and regularly gets **Red-breasted Flycatcher**. You should be able to find some other birders in Lampaul at lunchtime who will be able to pass on news of any rarities on the island. There are also plenty of options here if you feel like sampling some of the local Breton *cidre*. All that cycling is thirsty work ...

From Lampaul, head south and scan the bay, looking for waders and gulls, and then eastwards along the southern side of the island (checking the reservoirs for pipits and waders if you have time) towards Penn Ar Lan ④. Check the airstrip along the way for pipits, wagtails and waders. The sheltered wooded valley is another excellent spot to encounter migrants, and the bank of brambles on the other side of the road is productive, too. Aim to leave here around 3.30 pm.

Finally, head north (up the steep hill) back towards the ferry terminal, but carry on northward at the crossroads. The large patch of boggy woodland at Stang a Stiff is excellent for warblers and flycatchers, and to the north of here, the exposed Atlantic heath of the Cadoran peninsula ⑤ can produce **Dotterel** and **Snow** and **Lapland Buntings**, among other migrants. By now it will be about 4.30 pm, and you'll wish you'd booked some accommodation! At least you'll have the return ferry crossing to look forward to, so among the Balearics look out for **Sooty** and **Manx Shearwaters**, skuas, **Grey Phalarope** and **European Storm-petrel**. ■

The Cadoran peninsula lies to the north of Port du Stiff, where the ferry docks. It has an enviable reputation for migrants, producing **Dotterel**, among other species.



MARK LEWIS

## i VISITOR INFORMATION

### READS



- **Where to Watch Birds in France** by Philippe Dubois is out of print but can be obtained second hand.
- The annual bird report (in French) is available from the Association Naturaliste d'Ouessant.

### > Sites and access

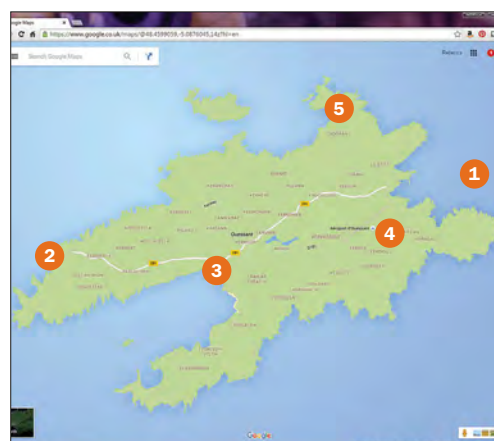
Most of Ouessant is public access, but please exercise caution around gardens or anywhere with livestock. The roads are mostly excellent, largely traffic free and a pleasure to cycle around (apart from one or two steeper bits!). There are numerous flights to Brest from London Heathrow. From Brest, it is necessary to take a ferry to Ouessant; see [www.pennarbed.fr/en](http://www.pennarbed.fr/en) for details. The best way for visitors to travel around the island is by bike; contact Cycl'Evasion (0033 (0)2 9848 8515, [www.cyclevasion-ouessant.com](http://www.cyclevasion-ouessant.com)), or Ouessant Cycles (0033 (0)2 9848 8344, [www.ouessantcycles.com](http://www.ouessantcycles.com)).

### > Maps

Visit [www.map-france.com](http://www.map-france.com).

### > Web resources

- <http://ouessant.observado.org/index.php?lang=en> for recent sightings in English.
- [www.ano-ouessant.com](http://www.ano-ouessant.com) for the Association Naturaliste d'Ouessant, with the latest bird news in French.



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## OCTOBER'S TARGET BIRD

# Little Bunting



JIM NICOLSON

**T**he most northerly breeding *Emberiza* bunting and the smallest in Europe, Little Bunting is a subtly attractive scarce annual visitor to Britain.

The species is monotypic, meaning it has no subspecies. It breeds from the Russian Far East, westwards across Siberia to Norway and Sweden. Its winter range is across south-eastern Asia, from north-east India to China. Recent DNA analysis shows it is most closely related to Yellow-breasted, Black-faced and Rustic Buntings, and it has sometimes been placed with them in a separate genus, *Ocyris*.

Little Bunting's range has expanded westwards. First breeding in Finland in 1935, the population there had grown to 5,000-10,000 pairs 50 years later. The number of sightings in Britain has risen since the 1960s, when an average of 10 were seen annually. In the last 20 years records have been mostly stable, and since 2005 there have been 30-40 each year, with 53 in 2012.

Most sightings come from the Northern Isles, eastern England and Scilly. It is much rarer anywhere else in Britain. Normally encountered as individual birds, there are a few instances of several arriving at a time.

Autumn migration from north-east Europe is in a south-easterly direction; passage begins in late July and most birds have left the

breeding area by mid-September. Most British records come in autumn, from September to November, with the last week of September and the first of October being the peak time for sightings. Wintering birds are occasionally seen, usually in the South-West, with some inland records. Given its normal winter range, the explanation for autumn records in Britain could be reverse migration. Spring passage lasts from March to early May and there are usually only a few spring records in Britain each year.

Unlike most other buntings it has a pre-breeding moult and males and females are almost identical, although spring males can look brighter.

## How to see

Little Bunting spends much time feeding on the ground, and will join flocks of other buntings or finches. Check coastal fields, especially after autumnal easterly winds. If a flock of birds flies up, listen for its distinctive call note. BirdGuides should be checked regularly as, ignoring fly-overs, many birds stay for more than a day, with wintering individuals sometimes lingering for months. ■

• For recent reports of Little Bunting in Britain and Ireland, go to [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com).

**BIRDGUIDES**



Little Bunting (above) is scarce in Britain and Ireland, and may require some effort to see. Autumn is the best time to locate one, with the first week of October particularly good. As can be seen from the BirdGuides map (left), of the 58 reports in October last year, the majority were at Britain's extremities, so a trip to Scilly or Shetland could be the best bet for finding your own.



## FIND YOUR OWN

Little Bunting is most frequently found in the Northern Isles, where it is scarce, and is also regular on Scilly, which has a few individuals each autumn. It is rare and less frequent at a few sites in eastern England from Northumberland to Norfolk.

### England

- **Northumberland:** Farne Islands (NU 230370)
- **East Yorkshire:** Flamborough Head (TA 254706) and Spurn Point (TA 419148)
- **Dorset:** Portland Bill (SY 681689)
- **Devon:** Lundy (SS 136447)
- **Scilly:** (SV 915110)

### Scotland

- **Shetland:** Out Skerries (HU 681718) and Fair Isle (HZ 221723)
- **Orkney:** North Ronaldsay (HY 785560)



VISIT [WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK](http://WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK) FOR TIPS ON FINDING MANY MORE TARGET BIRDS

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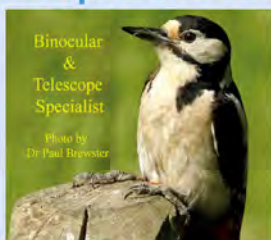
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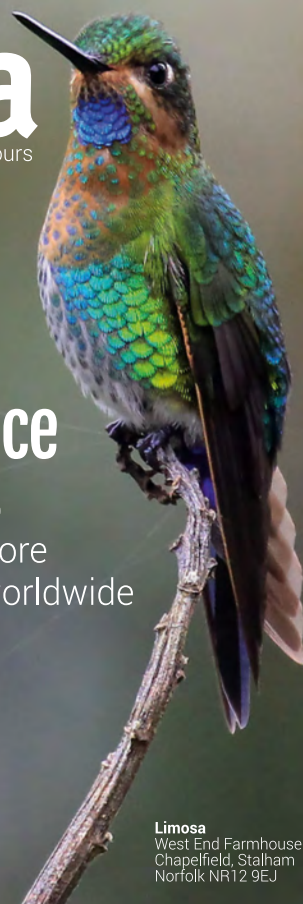
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# MARK AVERY

# Must do better

**Why we need our conservation organisations and political parties to work harder and return to their campaigning roots if they are to effect change.**

I'm writing this October column in mid-August – in the gap between Hen Harrier Day (9 August) and the 'Inglorious 12th' (the opening of the grouse shooting season) and the start of the Birdfair on 21st.

Today my voting papers for the Labour leadership campaign arrived, and I've been trying to decide how I will vote. By the time you read this column the result will have been published.

There is some similarity between the Labour Party and the RSPB. Both have had my support, one way or another, for most of my life, but both have this support a little more grudgingly now than they once did. But both are probably – though I waiver sometimes – still the best acts in town. I have hopes that both will recapture some of their campaigning zeal and speak out more clearly against wrongs in the future.

It seems to me that both are a little too keen on doing things that benefit themselves (growing their membership, for example) rather than making the world a better place. Both will say things like 'unless we appeal to the middle ground then we won't influence the world', but I want my NGOs and political parties to inspire me to follow them, not to snuggle up to the lowest common denominator.

## In a word

The trouble with too many conservationists and politicians these days is that they are so very careful with their words. You can almost see the calculations going on behind their eyes about how much of what they really think they should say. That's why politicians who appear authentic, such as Nigel Farage, Nicola Sturgeon and Jeremy Corbyn, appeal to voters – often despite their views – and why the likes of Chris Packham, George Monbiot and Brian May have such a following.

Our wildlife NGOs are a little too dull (and I do mean the organisations, not their leaders) and a little too worthy – and a lot too careful about what they say and too timid in their actions.

We need some major changes in action, not just gradual slow progress, which is why



STOPWAR.ORG.UK (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

**Jeremy Corbyn's popularity in the Labour leadership race has surprised many. Is it down to him saying what he really means?**

“That's why politicians who appear authentic appeal to voters – often despite their views”

campaigns and organisations are springing up on particular issues to move them on more quickly. Examples include badger culling, on which the big wildlife NGOs were rather quiet, illegal bird killing on Malta, and the harm done to the environment by the pointless pastime of driven grouse shooting.

You've heard the arguments for banning driven grouse shooting before, and more than 22,000 people signed the e-petition last year. Now another petition is available online and is proving even more successful. It passed 10,000 signatures within three weeks and topped 12,000 signatures appropriately enough on the 'Inglorious 12th'. Together, even without the help of the mainstream wildlife NGOs, we can make a difference. We have already changed the way that the media report on grouse shooting and raptor persecution. Our voices will be heard. ■



## Do this in October

Please sign the e-petition to ban driven grouse shooting at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/104441>. Then write to your MP to let them know that you have.



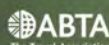
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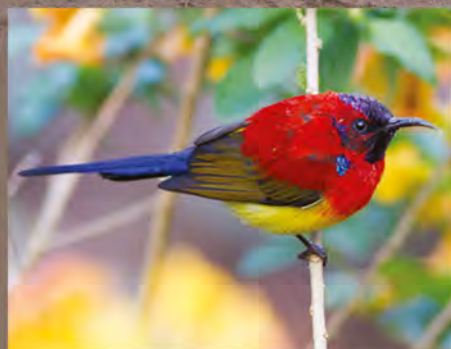
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Open expanses of grassland are attractive to large birds – this is a major problem at airports, where a collision with a bird such as White Stork can potentially cause millions of pounds worth of damage and result in loss of life.

MAARTEN VISSER

## Flocks away!

Airports can be attractive to birds, but that can cause problems: the assembled flocks can pose a real danger to aeroplanes and people. **Andy Baxter** reports on the problem and the methods used to keep birds off the runways.

**M**aintaining a safe operating environment for aircraft is, and always has been, an essential part of airport operations. The requirements placed on airports have become ever more visible during an age in which security and safety are often foremost in the travelling public's minds.

While we are all now familiar with the

measures put in place to ensure passenger security when travelling, the behind-the-scenes work that goes on to reduce conflicts with wildlife is perhaps less visible but equally important. Catastrophic events such as the 'Miracle on the Hudson' on 15 January 2009 – where flocks of migrating Canada Geese brought a large passenger aircraft down in New York, USA – have resulted in a new level of scrutiny to



Runways can attract large gatherings of birds – like these Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls photographed from a cockpit – causing serious headaches for airport authorities trying to prevent death and damage.

ALBERT DE HOON (WORLD BIRDSTRIKE ASSOCIATION)



KK101 (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

**Jet engines will often draw a bird's corpse into their mechanism, causing permanent and irreparable damage. These compressor blades situated in what is called the 'cold section' by the rotors are now unusable.**

the world of aircraft and bird strikes.

Since the dawn of aviation, birds and aircraft have failed to mix. The first recorded strike occurred with Orville Wright back in 1905 when, perhaps unsurprisingly, a bird was struck as he reportedly chased a flock around a field. By 1912 the first fatality had occurred when a gull became tangled in the control lines of Cal Rodgers's aircraft and he crashed into the sea. Since this event, many thousands of strikes with a wide variety of species have occurred around the world, with catastrophic consequences occurring with well over 100 civilian aircraft. At least 275 people have been

**This Brazilian Air Force jet fighter has been seriously incapacitated by a bird strike. The plane is effectively a write-off, as the entire engine and front section will have to be replaced. The pilot was lucky to survive.**



HENRIQUE RUBENS BALTA DE OLIVEIRA (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)



killed. The single worst incident to have occurred remains the 1960 loss of a Lockheed Electra Aircraft in Boston, USA, where 62 people were killed following a strike with Starlings.

However, modern manufacturing methods and understanding of risks caused by birds have, in combination with enhanced knowledge of bird behaviours and habitats, all helped to reduce the probability of a catastrophic incident. Despite this, the number of collisions with birds around the world has been rising. In the Britain alone, around 1,500 strikes a year are reported to the Civil Aviation Authority and in recent years have included everything from Black-headed Gulls to Budgerigars.

The majority of species and strikes result in little or no effect on aircraft. Larger species, or those which flock together, have a much higher probability of impacting on flight safety. To stem the risks these hazardous species may cause, airports are required both by international law and as a method for ensuring safe operations to reduce the risk of a strike. Controls are routinely put in place to reduce the likelihood of a bird coming into contact with an aircraft. British airports lead the way in controlling these issues and implement a suite of methods to minimise risks. As would be expected, the key to reducing risk is based around habitat management.

### Let the grass grow long

In the 1970's, populations of Northern Lapwings, gulls and Starlings had been creating particular problems for airport operators that relied on short grass aerodromes to maintain drainage and clear safety areas. The result was ideal habitat for birds that feed within such areas. Studies by the then Ministry of Agriculture, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence at RAF bases, produced what is now widely accepted as a 'Long Grass Policy'. This somewhat misleading title is actually a process by which grass is managed on airfields to maintain a sward of between 150 and 200 mm high, and containing as many upright stalks and as little weed as possible.

The result was monitored and developed across a suite of sites, and remains to this day one of the most effective ways of reducing the presence of gulls, corvids, Starlings, pigeons and waders. Of course, maintenance is needed and at certain times of year low cuts are made to remove decaying grass material and clean the sward out, but these are timed wherever possible to avoid gatherings of Rooks or other species that may attempt to take advantage. Airports understand that this, along with effective controls over food waste, water courses and building access, present the most feasible methods for preventing bird presence in the first place. Despite best endeavours, however, there are a number of species or individual birds that will attempt to use an airfield, and these may need to be dispersed.

It is tempting to call the active deterrence that is undertaken by most airports to protect flight safety as 'rocket science'. Simply put, the use of pyrotechnic bird cartridges and flares is one of the most routinely used methods of controlling the residual presence of birds on airfields. A carefully placed launch can disperse birds away from harm's way and help to make an airfield appear unattractive. Distress calls, the calls made by several species when physically captured by a predator, have the capacity to draw birds in as they would naturally do when responding to one of their own species' capture. Combinations of distress calls and pyrotechnics therefore have the potential to enable active management to control the dispersal directions of both individual birds and flocks that present a risk to flight safety.

Bird scaring, the uncontrolled dispersal of birds from an area, is simply not an option in an airfield environment.



## DANGERS OF TALL BUILDINGS

FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM (WWW.FLAP.ORG)



Just some of the many hundreds of dead birds which were collected by schoolchildren over the course of one year, after the birds had collided with buildings in Toronto, Canada. They include American Woodcock, Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

**THE** website of the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) displays a gruesome image of hundreds of dead birds lying side by side (above), having collided with some of the 950,000 buildings in Toronto, Canada. FLAP ([www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org)), the first organisation in the world to tackle the dangers which man-made structures pose to birds, estimates that the number of migrants killed annually in building strikes across North America alone ranges from 100 million to one billion.

Many species migrate at night and are guided by the constellations. This means they are attracted to lights left on overnight in urban areas, and some crash into buildings. By day,

however, they are deceived by panes of glass, whether it's the reflection of a tree or a pot plant on a window sill.

The perils of brightly lit buildings are by no means a modern phenomenon. On 22 August 1888, newly installed electric lights on the Statue of Liberty saw 1,500 migrants crash to their deaths. In September 1948, around 800 birds died after colliding with the Empire State Building, attracted by lights shining through fog.

As awareness of the issue grew, various 'lights out' initiatives have seen New York and Toronto skyscrapers either switch off or dim their lights. Nowadays, more migrants are killed colliding with windows at or near ground level.

Whereas in the US and Canada there has been extensive research around birds colliding with buildings, no such data exist in Britain. In 2009, Southampton City Council commissioned a study into wetland bird flight paths around the city. It suggested the plotting of flight line maps in relation to high structure planning applications to help avoid collisions. But with so little known about the frequency of bird strikes in Britain, the study recommended engaging with residents and owners of tall buildings to better understand the problem.

Meanwhile, back in Toronto, FLAP has developed a pioneering building risk assessment service known as BirdSafe, which advises owners on deterring collisions. With the trend for urban development in Britain now seeing an increase in taller structures, it is more imperative than ever that we look at similar methods on this side of the pond. **David Mills**



This House Sparrow hit a household window, showing that it's not just skyscrapers that pose a danger to birds.

DAVID HATTON

While much can be done to reduce the risk of habituation to techniques, the critical requirement is to vary the methods used so that the natural fear birds have of anything new is used to the airport's advantage. The use of techniques can be as low tech as a weighted bag being thrown up into the air, football rattles or, to the embarrassment of many a bird controller, standing in the middle of the airfield and slowly waving arms up and down. Equally, sophisticated systems – including radar, image intensification and thermal imaging – can be used for detection, with modern laser systems and

acoustics developed for dispersal. The variations used by bird controllers on airfields are often critical to the minimisation of habituation.

What is rarely noted, however, is the benefits that habitat maintenance and control of the larger hazardous species on airfields often presents to smaller species such as Skylark and Meadow Pipit. While these species are still undesirable to an aircraft operator, as a strike with a small bird can result in a precautionary landing, associated fuel dumps, passenger delays, engineering inspections and potentially even damage,



This juvenile Broad-winged Hawk has come to a sticky end after a mid-air collision with the nosecone of a Lockheed C-130 Hercules American military transport plane. Despite the model's low accident rate, bird strikes are random events that can affect any plane. The hawk has penetrated right inside the nosecone, meaning that the large and costly plane has to be taken completely out of service.

## “The use of pyrotechnic cartridges and flares is a routinely used method of controlling the presence of birds on airfields”

they are nevertheless well suited to an airfield that runs a 'long grass policy'. Preventing large flocking birds from being present on an airfield will remain the key objective of flight safety, but a tolerance for single small birds within airfield grassland is a generally accepted by-product.

### Landfill hazard

With the requirements for the management and control of habitat and bird presence on the airfield being well understood, conflict often arises through the process of safeguarding planning applications within the vicinity of airfields. Clearly the development of a large open landfill site adjacent to an airport has the potential to significantly increase the presence of hazardous birds in the vicinity of aircraft and is likely to sustain an objection from the airport in question.

Where does the issue arise, however, in relation to housing developments, sewage works, gravel pits, nature reserves, and so forth, that all have the potential to increase risk? Each site has to be assessed on its own merits. What may be acceptable at one aerodrome because of the existing habitats and potential movements of birds within the area may not be acceptable at another. Sites that result in flightlines of large or flocking birds that cross the airport or its approaches may need controls or planning

amendments but, equally, sites that draw hazardous birds away that are currently crossing the airfield may prove advantageous.

What routinely causes conflict, therefore, is not the potential impact of noise and aircraft on birds (if disturbance by aircraft was an issue birds would not need dispersing from airports), but the impact of birds on aircraft. Habitats designed to help attract single secretive wintering Bitterns are unlikely to be an issue for flight safety. If such habitats are suitable for the development of large and spectacular Starling roosts, however, the potential for catastrophic consequences requires the airport to seek prevention or modification.

Habitats that are rich and biodiverse but do not sustain species of risk to aviation are the Holy Grail of landscape developments, and with the minerals extraction and waste management industries, building developers, nature conservation organisations and the aviation industry working together, much has been done to help formulate safe yet appropriate developments within the vicinity of airports. Biodiversity on and around airports can still be maintained, and is indeed a sought-after objective of airport operators in Britain, but until a method of teaching birds to avoid aircraft is developed, flight safety and the maintenance of a safe operating environment will continue to drive the work to reduce risks at airports. ■



Bird-repellent grass introduced in 2011 has been of great benefit in keeping birds away from sensitive areas at airports. It incorporates a fungus which produces chemicals that make birds sick when they eat it or its seeds, but does not cause them permanent damage. It is also kept at a length which should actively prevent most flocking birds from assembling.

# Set sail for seabirds



Pelagic trips on board the *Scillonian III* have passed into birding legend, with many birders having tales of what they saw – or didn't see. **James Hanlon** takes a personal look back at the ship's sterling service of almost 40 years.



Great Shearwater was a speciality of the pelagics, with flocks of hundreds seen from the decks of the *Scillonian*.

It was August 1989, and as a fresh-faced 14-year-old I had travelled to Cornwall by train to take part in my first pelagic trip aboard the MV *Scillonian III*. Expectations were high and my mind was on the fantastic seabirds that lay beyond the horizon, just waiting to be discovered. I gave little thought to the 68-metre-long, 1,200-ton vessel I had boarded, but over the years it came to be like an old friend, greeting me after many of my long journeys to Penzance and delivering me safe to Scilly, that charmed archipelago, and back again into port on the mainland.

I am not the only one to have a fondness for this ship. Serving the islands since 1977, it has unceremoniously ferried birders and other tourists back and forth, sometimes when all other transport has been grounded by the weather, and in the process has become steeped in birding folklore. We all seem to have our own '*Scillonian* tales'. I remember once oversleeping in my car at Exeter services and making that morning's sailing by a whisker – they let me on board just two minutes before raising the gang-way.

On another sailing I was lucky enough to call a Fea's Petrel (accompanying a Great Shearwater) in the ship's wake, which was witnessed by my two companions before it veered off into the distance all too quickly. This once-mythical seabird was also seen the previous year on a scheduled pelagic, a sighting which will doubtless remain a birding highlight for the many passengers on board for the rest of their lives. The atmosphere on deck at the time must have been electric.

## Magic moments

These once-annual all-day pelagics ran for many years and helped countless birders catch up with a number of elusive seabirds in the Western Approaches beyond Scilly. Wilson's Storm-petrel (see *Birdwatch* 277: 38-43) was considered the main prize, and it was aboard the *Scillonian* that I saw my first in 1998, after three previous attempts. Great Shearwaters were another speciality, and on that first pelagic of mine the boat ploughed straight through a flock of perhaps 400 individuals, the birds disappearing momentarily beneath the bow before taking off en masse and wheeling round together in a great arc – a truly memorable moment.

Not all passengers present on these pelagics were willing participants. On



IAN LYCETT



Back in the late Nineties, this full-day *Scillonian* pelagic trip recorded several sightings of Wilson's Storm-petrel and Cory's Shearwaters.

GARETH KNASS



Cetaceans are often seen from the ship, with Basking Sharks, Ocean Sunfish and dolphins, such as these Common Dolphins, all recorded.



RICHARD BAYLON

one of the earlier trips, a couple on board were heard to ask when the boat would be docking in St Mary's, as they were feeling decidedly unwell. They were informed the boat would be missing the islands altogether and returning to Penzance 15 hours later.

This unfortunate couple are not the only passengers to have been a little green around the gills on board. The *Scillonian* has occasionally been dubbed the 'Sickonian', and for good reason. Many a birder has been reminded of their breakfast from its rolling, pitching and swaying deck – and I speak from personal experience. The

shallow 2.89 m draft and convergence of currents off Land's End are both responsible for its infamous reputation.

The gut-churning stench of the 'chum' on the pelagics certainly never helped in this respect, either. Without going into too much detail, the decks can be a dangerous place if you're downwind of someone being ill, and on that very first voyage I quickly learned that it's best if you can make it to the very back of the boat if you really can't hold it in.

### Rarity report

Fea's Petrel may be a dream bird to see from the decks, but it is not the rarest sighting to have been made from the vessel. In 1999 Britain's first Short-toed Eagle toured the islands and was at one point seen from the *Scillonian* as it cruised by. But it was a group of five or so visiting birders in 2002 that really

JIM ALMOND (WWW.SHROPSHIREBIRDER.CO.UK)



**Main photo:** still going strong, the *Scillonian III* has ferried passengers between Penzance and Scilly since 1977. **Inset:** it's not all about seabirds. Exhausted migrants like this Willow Warbler will rest on board the ship, even using birders' equipment to perch on.

came up trumps. ‘Twitching’ the islands for nothing more than an Alpine Swift, they were astonished to clock a Red-billed Tropicbird as the boat neared St Mary’s.

The magnitude of this sighting is underlined by the willingness of some who were desperate to see it to attempt a long-distance twitch against all the odds. To their dismay the tropicbird was never seen again, but it had always been a long shot to try to intercept a bird of such a pelagic nature.

The following year a Lesser Kestrel set up temporary home on Penninis Head, St Mary’s, and birders arriving by *Scillonian* would strain to scrutinise any distant hovering bird in the vicinity of the headland as the boat passed by. But it was on the return journey that travelling birders got a real shock. A claim of Red-billed Tropicbird (again) was broadcast to the birding community by pager as a ‘mega’ alert and must have caused chaos on board. My own heart sank, as I had chosen to take the plane and was at the time on *terra firma* heading home to London, when a follow-up message came through: the tropicbird had been reidentified as a Northern Gannet trailing some fishing line. Oh dear!

Such misidentifications are part and parcel of birding and the *Scillonian* is no stranger to these events. At least two ‘albatrosses’ have seemingly morphed into gannets before the eyes of watchers on deck, and at least one of these claims is disputed to this day. The pelagics have long since ceased, sadly, with today’s



Wilson's Storm-petrel was one of the main targets of the pelagics. The discovery that the species could be seen close to the Scilly Isles saw the demise of the *Scillonian's* deep-sea trips.

JAMES LOWEN



JAMES HANLON

**Chum (above)** is a somewhat evil concoction consisting of fish parts, cooking oil and popcorn (or similar cereal-based foodstuffs). It is used to attract a variety of seabirds. The wearing of gloves (below) is highly recommended to anyone planning on handling the substance.



CHRIS GALVIN (WWW.CHRISGALVINPHOTO.COM)

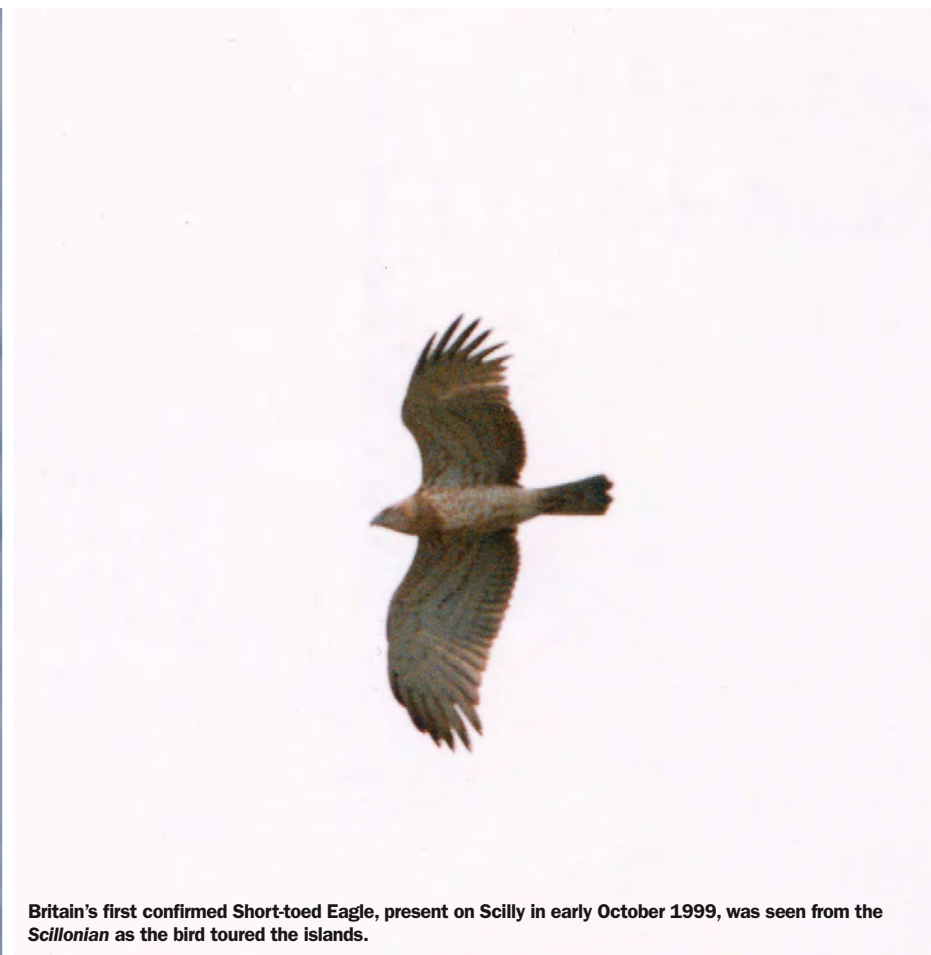
seabird enthusiasts chasing petrels and shearwaters from smaller boats based on the islands themselves. These boats often go no more than a few miles off the coast, as it was gradually realised that Wilson’s Storm-petrels are regularly seen in waters just offshore.

## Survivor

Over the years the boat has defied replacement with a more modern vessel (instead being given a £1.7 m facelift), survived a competing helicopter service (which ceased in 2012), and has had its share of dramas, with the airlift of a stricken passenger in 2011 by helicopter and an incident in which it ran aground on St Mary’s on a low tide a couple of years later. It starred in the BBC series *An Island Parish* and even hit the news headlines when a stowaway Scilly Shrew was found on board.

The *Scillonian* owes its iconic nature perhaps to its sheer longevity (it has already exceeded its predecessor’s 30-year reign) and to the continued popularity of the islands with birders. Numbers of the latter have dropped off sharply since the Eighties, due in part to the rising costs of a holiday on Scilly, as well as an increasing number of rarity-hunters finding northern locations such as Shetland more to their taste.

A day return on the *Scillonian* has, however, remained reasonably priced



**Britain's first confirmed Short-toed Eagle, present on Scilly in early October 1999, was seen from the *Scillonian* as the bird toured the islands.**

GEORGE RESZETER (WWW.BIRDSOFEUROPE.CO.UK)

and is a popular means of 'twitching' rare birds such as the recent Great Blue Heron on Scilly, even if the four-hour window on the islands can make things a little tight for connecting with elusive birds or those on islands away from St

Mary's. It's still a regular fixture passing Porthgwarra, distracting seawatchers when seabird passage is slow.

If you haven't already, why not take a trip aboard? If seabirds are not your thing, watch out for bow-riding

Common Dolphins which are regularly seen on the crossings. Just remember to take seasickness pills if you need them and make sure you keep upwind of those passengers not looking their best. Long live the MV *Scillonian III*! ■

**With just three accepted British records, all from Scilly, Fea's Petrel remains a mega-rarity. The author sketched this bird from a sighting on board the *Scillonian III*.**



JAMES HANLON

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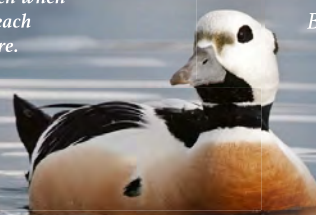


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# Great Grey, Steppe Grey and Lesser Grey Shrikes

## PHOTO GUIDE

1



**1 Great Grey Shrike (Hopwood, Worcestershire, 10 January 2014).** This is a characteristic view of a Great Grey Shrike, perched high on a winter bough and looking appropriately pale and 'frosty'. Its precise wing pattern is a little obscured here by its flank feathers, but the other diagnostic features of Great Grey Shrike are readily visible: a relatively slim bill, short legs, a solid dark mask and, most importantly, a short primary projection, no longer than the exposed tertials, which gives a strikingly long-tailed appearance.

### PROFILE



**ANDY STODDART** is Vice Chairman of the Rarities Committee and has many years' birding experience. He is also author of many ID papers and several books.

Finding a grey shrike is a feather in any birder's cap, as even the most regular form, Great Grey Shrike, is a national scarcity. However, there is also the distinct possibility of the annual Lesser Grey Shrike and the mega-rare Steppe Grey Shrike, both of which are similar in plumage and need care taken in their separation. Add to this the taxonomic complexity of the group and the chance of further forms occurring in Britain, and you have the potential for both discoveries and mistakes. **Andy Stoddart** guides you through the myriad complexities of grey shrike identification.

# BASIC PRINCIPLES

In the good old days there were only two sorts of grey shrike to worry about in Britain: Lesser Grey Shrike and Great Grey Shrike. Recently, however, things have got a lot more complicated.

While the position of Lesser Grey Shrike hasn't changed, what we used to think of as Great Grey Shrike has undergone something of a taxonomic revolution and, in all likelihood, there is much more to come. Previously regarded as a highly variable species occupying boreal, temperate, semi-desert and desert habitats across the Holarctic, the penny has finally dropped that we are dealing with more than one species.

To date, there has been a single split into a 'northern' group known as 'Great Grey Shrike' (put crudely, the boreal and temperate breeders) and a 'southern' group known as 'Southern Grey Shrike' (the semi-desert and desert breeders). However, these groupings are a somewhat untidy conglomeration of rather disparate subspecies, while the latest DNA evidence fails to support the current split, identifying potentially at least six species within the complex. For the purposes of this article, though, I will follow the current official taxonomy and recognise three grey shrike species, all of which reach Britain.

## Lesser Grey Shrike

Let's start with the easy one! Lesser Grey Shrike has always been recognised as highly distinct in structure and plumage and retains an uncontroversial position as a full species. It breeds from the Mediterranean into Central Asia and winters in southern Africa. It is a rare though annual vagrant to Britain, with almost 200 records to date. It typically occurs in late spring and early to mid-autumn.

Given good views, it is straightforward to identify. It is noticeably smaller than the other two species with a rather 'bull-headed' appearance, a short bill, a relatively long primary projection and a large white primary flash, but dark secondaries. Adults show a striking dark forehead, which is solidly black in males but more speckled in females, and a beautiful pink flush to the underparts; first-winters lack these features.

## Great Grey Shrike

This is a regular scarce autumn migrant and winter visitor to Britain, the first reaching North Sea coasts in early October before a highly scattered winter population takes up residence inland.

The species' large size, long tail and short primary projection readily separates it from Lesser Grey Shrike. Most birds occurring in Britain are Scandinavian in origin and present a relatively consistent appearance: mid-grey above with slightly paler scapulars, a complete black mask, a relatively short white flash at the base of the primaries and little or no visible white in the secondary bases. Some older literature refers to such birds as '*melanopterus*' and although the term has fallen out of fashion, it is perhaps still useful.

A few birds reaching Britain, however, show a rather different set of characters, including pale lores, more extensively pale scapulars, a larger white primary flash, extensive white in the secondary bases and more extensive white in the tail. These features are close to those described for the south-east European and south-west Russian form *homeyeri* which has been recorded in Finland, Sweden and Germany, but is not on the British list.

The taxonomic position of *homeyeri* is debated, as are its

identification criteria, at least part of the reason being the existence of paler birds in Central Europe, once called '*galliae*' but rarely referred to in the modern literature. It is presumably these birds that account for the few exceptional-looking Great Grey Shrikes that occur here, and whatever we call them, they are striking birds that are well worth looking for.

Although not yet recorded in Britain, a further target is the grey shrikes of north-east Asia (*sibiricus*) and North America (*borealis*). Currently subsumed within Great Grey Shrike, they are highly distinct and a prime candidate for recognition as a separate species, Northern Shrike. These birds show weakly marked lores, brown hues in the upperparts, dark vermiculations in the underparts, a small white primary flash, no white in the secondary bases and reduced white in the tail. Although no such birds have been seen here, *sibiricus* has reached Finland and Norway, and *borealis* has occurred on the Azores.

## Southern Grey Shrike

This newly defined species comprises a host of dry country grey shrikes from *koenigi* in the Canaries through a number of other desert forms in North Africa and the Middle East to *pallidirostris* in Asia. Of this complex, only this last form has reached Britain. It breeds from the Caspian Sea, north-east Iran, Afghanistan and northern Pakistan through Central Asia to Mongolia. Not all are migratory but some move south-west to winter in Arabia and north-east Africa.

The first British record was on Fair Isle in September 1956. Since then there have been some 20 more and *pallidirostris* is confirmed as a regular though still very rare vagrant, mainly in mid- to

late autumn and early winter (though there are single spring and summer records, too).

This form shows a rather large head, a bulbous-looking pale bill and a relatively long primary projection combined with pale grey upperparts, 'dusty', pink-tinged underparts, pale lores, a small, brown-toned ear covert patch, large rectangular primary patches and wholly dark secondaries. The most likely confusion is a pale '*galliae*-type' Great Grey Shrike, but the wing structure and wholly dark secondaries will clinch the deal.

Despite its current taxonomic position, genetic evidence suggests that *pallidirostris* might best be treated as a form of a newly defined 'Asian Grey Shrike'. Its English name is also problematic. Previously called 'Bogdanoff's Shrike' or 'Grimm's Grey Shrike', it has recently become known colloquially as 'Steppe Grey Shrike'. Unfortunately, the name 'Steppe Shrike' is already in use for *homeyeri* Great Grey Shrike and, to make matters worse, while this latter form does occur in steppe grassland, *pallidirostris* does not, being found in dry desert scrub. The name is both confusing and poorly founded and should arguably be abandoned. 'Saxaul Grey Shrike', recognising a typical tree of its habitat, has been proposed as an alternative.

Although no other forms of Southern Grey Shrike have been confirmed in Britain, the very distinctive dark form *meridionalis* from the Iberian peninsula (itself a likely split) has been suspected and perhaps has the potential to occur. To complicate matters further, an apparent – but presumed escape – *lahtora* (the Indian form) frequented a garden near Dereham, Norfolk, in the autumn and early winter of 1982. ■

2



**2 Great Grey Shrike (Grove, Buckinghamshire, 22 January 2015).** This flying Great Grey Shrike shows the typical clean pale grey upperparts and cold greyish-white underparts of this species. The bill is also quite slender and the black mask is complete, covering the lores. Most interesting, however, is the wing pattern. In Great Grey Shrike this varies considerably from birds with just a small white patch confined to the primaries to those with a larger white primary patch which also extends prominently across the bases of the secondaries. This bird shows a typically sized primary patch and a moderate extension of white across the secondary bases.

3



**3 Steppe Grey Shrike (Burnham Norton, Norfolk, 15 October 2014).** This flight view of a first-winter Southern Grey Shrike of the form *pallidirostris* – commonly known as Steppe Grey Shrike – shows to perfection its characteristic wing pattern of an extremely large white rectangular patch confined to the primaries with no white in the secondaries, even at the bases. This pattern resembles that of Lesser Grey Shrike, but there are plenty of other clues to its real identity here, notably its very pale grey upperparts which are slightly 'dusted' brown, subtly pink underparts, rather weakly marked lores and a stout, rather bulbous and largely pale bill.

4



**4 Lesser Grey Shrike (Larnaca, Cyprus, 27 April 2013).** This flying adult grey shrike shows a similar wing pattern to the Steppe Grey Shrike in photo 3, but it is otherwise quite distinct. The most striking differences are a slightly neckless appearance with a short, stubby and dark bill, deep ash-grey upperparts and a black facial mask which extends onto the forehead. This combination of features is shown only by adult Lesser Grey Shrike. Note also the very extensive white in the tail sides.

5



**5 Great Grey Shrike (Beeley Moor, Derbyshire, 29 March 2015).** This bird shows the typical structure of a Great Grey Shrike. The head looks small, the bill is relatively slender compared with Steppe Grey and Lesser Grey Shrikes, the legs are short and the primary projection is strikingly short too, contributing to a very long-tailed appearance. In terms of plumage, note the typically clean pale grey upperparts lacking any brown hues, a complete solid black mask covering the lores and a medium-sized white primary patch.

6



**6 Steppe Grey Shrike (Sohar, Oman, 15 November 2008).** This *pallidirostris* Southern Grey Shrike shows a distinctive set of structural characters. Compared with the Great Grey Shrike in photo 5, note the large-looking head, the long, heavy, bulbous bill, quite long legs and a more pointed wing formed by a primary projection that matches the length of the tertials. This contributes to a slightly shorter-tailed look than Great Grey Shrike. Typically the upperparts have strong pale brown hues, while the underparts are very softly pink. Note also the characteristic pale lores (a feature of first-winters) and pale bill.

7



**7 Lesser Grey Shrike (Marsa Alam, Egypt, 2 May 2009).** The solidly black forehead provides a quick shortcut to identifying this bird as an adult Lesser Grey Shrike, but the typical structural and plumage features are visible here, too. The bill is stout, quite short and wholly dark. The bird has a slightly 'front-heavy' look and the primary projection can be seen to be very long – a key feature of this species. Turning to plumage, the upperparts are a deep ash-grey, the underparts are strongly suffused pink (a feature of adults) and the primary patch is quite large, beyond the range of most Great Grey Shrikes.

8



HANS GEBUIJS (WWW.AGAMI.NL)

**8 Great Grey Shrike (Zuid-Holland, The Netherlands, 10 January 2005).**

The relatively small head and bill, short legs, short primary projection and long tail quickly identify this bird as a Great Grey Shrike. Typically, the black mask is complete (including the lores) and the primary patch is small. The size of this patch varies considerably, however. The bird in photo 5 shows a relatively large patch for a Great Grey Shrike, but this bird's smaller patch is perhaps more typical.

9



DOMINIC MITCHELL (WWW.BIRDINGETC.COM)

**9 Steppe Grey Shrike**

**(Grainthorpe, Lincolnshire, 14 November 2008).** The long primary projection of this bird, forming a long, pointed wing-tip, should ring immediate alarm bells. A quick look at the enormous white primary patch should confirm that this is no Great Grey Shrike. A pointed wing and a large primary patch are shown by both Steppe Grey and Lesser Grey Shrikes, however, so we need to keep looking. The combination of a rather long, bulbous bill, large head, longish legs and pale lores identify the bird as a first-winter of the former. The light here is hampering any assessment of the plumage hues, but in life the pale grey, brown-'dusted' upperparts and softly pink underparts should also be apparent.

10



RICHARD BROOKS (WWW.RICHARD-BROOKS.CO.UK)

**10 Lesser Grey Shrike (Lemnos, Greece, 9 September 2009).**

This bird shows a long wing-point, quite a large primary patch on the closed wing and lacks a black forehead. Could it be another Southern Grey Shrike? A closer look reveals a different story, however. The primary projection is really very long, the bill is short, stubby and dark, the upperparts are a deep ash-grey and, most importantly, some dark flecking is visible in the lower forehead. This is a first-winter Lesser Grey Shrike.

11



**11 Northern Shrike (Corvo, Azores, 19 October 2014).**

Looking at this bird's structure, the combination of a small head, slender bill, short-looking wing and short legs place it firmly in the Great Grey Shrike camp. Its plumage is odd, however, comprising pale lores, strong barring throughout the underparts, a tiny, barely visible white primary patch and limited white in the outer tail. This combination of features points to one of two very similar forms – Siberian *sibiricus* or American *borealis*, both of which are potential vagrants to Britain. Although there are no plumage clues here to eliminate Siberian *sibiricus*, the mid-Atlantic location is strong circumstantial evidence that this bird is a North American *borealis*.

12



**12 Iberian Grey Shrike (Ronda, Spain, 24 February 2006).**

This bird also looks odd. It resembles Great Grey Shrike, but its upperparts are a solid dark grey, there is a strong curling supercilium over the lores and there are pink hues in the underparts. Neither its wing pattern nor structure can be properly assessed, but already it should be clear that this combination of features matches none of our three main subjects. In fact this is a Southern Grey Shrike of the Iberian form *meridionalis*, unrecorded in Britain but perhaps a potential vagrant. Southern Grey Shrikes comprise a host of disparate forms and certainly present more opportunities for taxonomic revision.

JENS SØGAARD HANSEN

GEORGE RESZETER (WWW.BIRDSONEUROPE.CO.UK)

# Find your own grey shrikes

**THOUGH Great Grey Shrikes** are scarce, sparsely distributed habitués of heathland, farmland, young conifer plantations, moorland and scrub, they are best seen in winter when dozens of regular birds return to fairly reliable traditional territories in Britain. A few birds can be seen on passage and arrival in October and November, but your best bet will be checking BirdGuides.com for the solitary seasonal birds that occupy sites in Suffolk, Norfolk, Surrey, the New Forest, Hants, South Wales, the Yorkshire moors, Cumbria, Northumberland and Borders.

Sites vary and new ones are added every year, as others are vacated, but in recent years particularly reliable sites have been Great Litchfield Down, Hants (SU 4755), Ashdown Forest, East Sussex (TQ 4332),

Thursley (SU 9040) and Frensham (SU 8540) Commons, Surrey, Grime's Graves (TL 8189) and Roydon Common NWT (TF 6922), Norfolk, Upper Hollesley Common, Suffolk (TM 3347), Beeley Moor, Derbyshire (SK 2967), Lytham Moss (SD 3430) and Grindleton Fell (SD 7447), Lancs, Pantmaenog Forest, Pembrokeshire (SN 0830), Harwood Forest, Northumberland (NY 9894), Cleish, Perth and Kinross (NT 0998), and Fetteresso Forest, Aberdeenshire (NO 7387).

**Lesser Grey Shrike** is far less predictable in its appearances, though records are skewed towards the east coast. That said, most counties in Britain – including those inland – have at least one record of the species, but the most likely are Norfolk (22 records), East Yorkshire (10

records), Northumberland (11 records) and, above all, Shetland (45 records). Occurrences have somewhat decreased this century, but there are still up to four records per year. September is the peak month (though this is almost matched in May and June), but birds continue to turn up in October and November.

**Steppe Grey Shrike** is a true mega, and like many other exceptionally rare species, is most likely to be found on one of the Northern Isles. Shetland and Orkney have three records each, while Essex, Suffolk and Lincolnshire have two. Considering the eastern origins of *pallidirostris*, it is unsurprising that most records are from the east coast, but single birds have been found as far west as Scilly and the Isle of Man. ■

## FURTHER READING



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Covering all true shrikes, bush-shrikes, helmet-shrikes, wood-shrikes, shrike flycatchers, philentomas, batistes and wattle-eyes, this book offers information on 114 species in 21 genera within the families Laniidae and Malaconotidae. The detailed accounts should lead to successful in-the-field identification of all species – including Great Grey, Steppe Grey and Lesser Grey Shrikes.

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To order see page 77, call 01778 392027 or visit the Birdwatch Bookshop at [www.birdwatch.co.uk/store](http://www.birdwatch.co.uk/store).

## Quiz bird



**WISE** to the idea that a grey shrike could be found in a favoured piece of autumn habitat, you have begun to regularly visit a patch of small conifers and scrub on the coast to find one. Eventually this pays off with a bird perched in a classically ostentatious manner on a rusty barbed wire fence. It is clearly a grey shrike, but which species?

Take careful note of its plumage and other details and identify the bird!

### How to enter

Once you think you have the right answer, let us know the identity of the bird in this photo at [bit.ly/bw280ShrikeQuiz](http://bit.ly/bw280ShrikeQuiz). Be quick, though, as the competition closes on 9 October! The answer will be available online at [www.birdwatch.co.uk/win](http://www.birdwatch.co.uk/win) from 12 October, and the first randomly chosen reader with the correct answer will win a copy of *The Urban Birder* (published by New Holland). ■

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# Split personality

**David Callahan** charts the fortunes of a rare species pair and the occurrences of each in Britain since they were first recorded.

**O**n 31 August 1948, an unknown leaf warbler was caught in the Garden Trap at Skokholm Bird Observatory, Pembrokeshire. Despite prolonged examination of the bird that evening and the following morning, its identification proved elusive and in a move that would cause outrage today, the bird was killed in order to send it to a museum for identification.

This harsh decision resulted in the specimen being sent to the Yorkshire Museum, where a Mr R Wagstaffe identified it as a female Bonelli's warbler, most likely of the eastern 'form' *orientalis* (now regarded as a full species). However, in spite of this expert opinion, the bird had been heard to utter a Common Chiffchaff-like *hooet* call, diagnostic of Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, and it is now believed to have been this species.

This bird became the first British record of either form of Bonelli's warbler, and not only underscores the differences in attitude between modern bird identification and 'old school' methods, but also highlights the difficulty of differentiating the two taxa even now. At the time of writing there are 83 British and Irish records of indeterminate 'Bonelli's warblers', the most recent being from 2013, despite some birds having been well photographed, videoed or even trapped. Clearly, while the species pair is fairly straightforward to separate from other leaf warblers, silent birds are far from easy to tell apart from each other.

Since its inaugural appearance, Western Bonelli's Warbler has notched up 124 accepted British records, and is now regarded as a rare annual visitor in



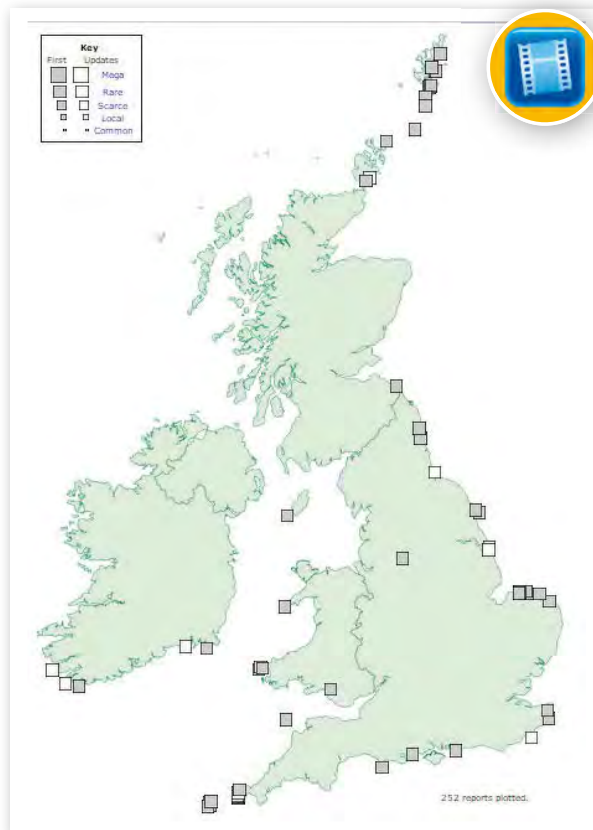
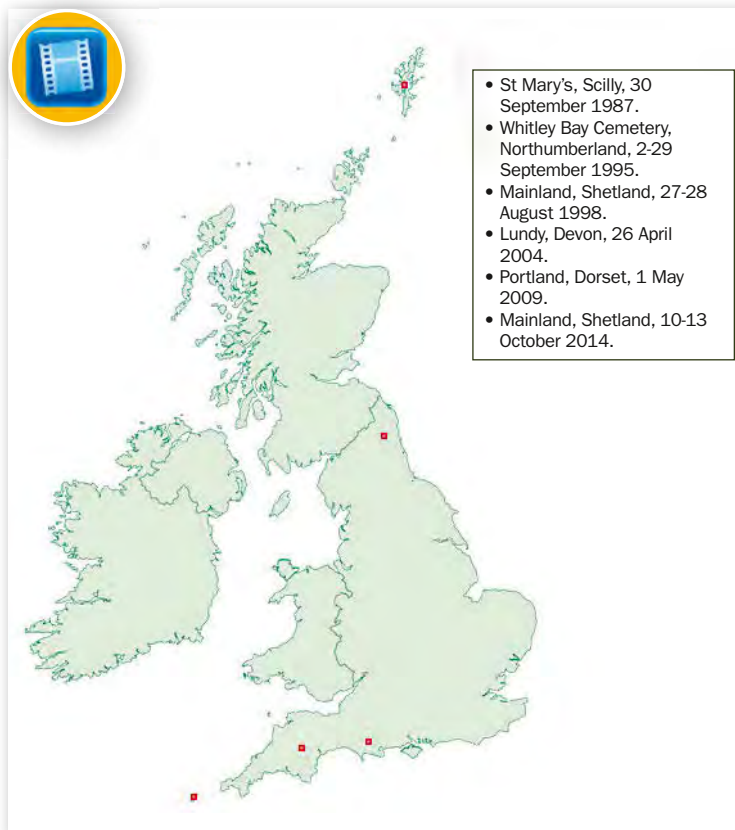
**Right:** once the news got out about it having the correct call, last year's Eastern Bonelli's Warbler caused a substantial local twitch at Scalloway, Mainland, Shetland. **Above inset:** the Eastern Bonelli's Warbler at Scalloway remained present from 10-14 October 2014, giving good views at times. Both species are often confiding and feed speedily in the branches of trees, but the visible plumage details overlap in their subtle shades of colour and tend not to be reliable for identification; hearing the call is essential.

small numbers; there are 14 Irish records. Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, however, remains a mega-rarity, with a mere six accepted British records from as far apart as Scilly and Shetland, and none in Ireland.

The first proven Eastern Bonelli's Warbler was found on St Mary's, Scilly, on 30 September 1987, and was initially put out as "a possible Bonelli's" owing to confusion arising from its seemingly



“The two Bonelli's warblers remain physically similar enough to create headaches for ornithologists and birders alike”



**Above left:** the six accepted occurrences of Eastern Bonelli's Warbler prior to 2014 – based on a BirdGuides.com map – were about as widely spread as they could be in Britain, though there is a general south-west bias. This may indicate that birds are more likely to arrive via a southern Continental route, but this remains speculation. **Above right:** this BirdGuides.com map shows Western Bonelli's Warbler occurrences since 1 January 2001. Once a mega-rarity, the species is now a rare annual visitor, though it is yet to occur in the Outer Hebrides, probably owing to its south-westerly Continental distribution.



atypical *chip* call. As the bird was out of sight, a more familiar *hooet* sound was heard a few times, resulting in the news of “a definite Bonelli's” – that is, Western – being put out. Birders travelling to see the bird only heard the *chip* call when it was in view, and these conflicting observations led to its true identification as an Eastern Bonelli's languishing until it was reviewed in 1999. It is now accepted as Eastern, and the *hooet* call is believed to have been a Common Chiffchaff calling nearby while the Eastern Bonelli's was out of sight.

### Mediterranean species pair

Western Bonelli's Warbler breeds from north-west Africa and Iberia north to northern France and as far east as Austria and Italy, with a small geographical range gap to where Eastern Bonelli's breeds from Croatia across the central and southern Balkans (hence its alternative English name of Balkan Warbler) to parts of (mainly) west and central Turkey, Lebanon, possibly Syria, northern Israel and Jordan (irregular), with an outpost in western Iran. This pattern reflects similar distributions in other recently divided species groups such as orphea, olivaceous and subalpine warblers, all of which have ranges centred on the Mediterranean basin.

The history of passerines in this area of the Western Palearctic has little fossil evidence and lineages must be traced using molecular means. The few analyses



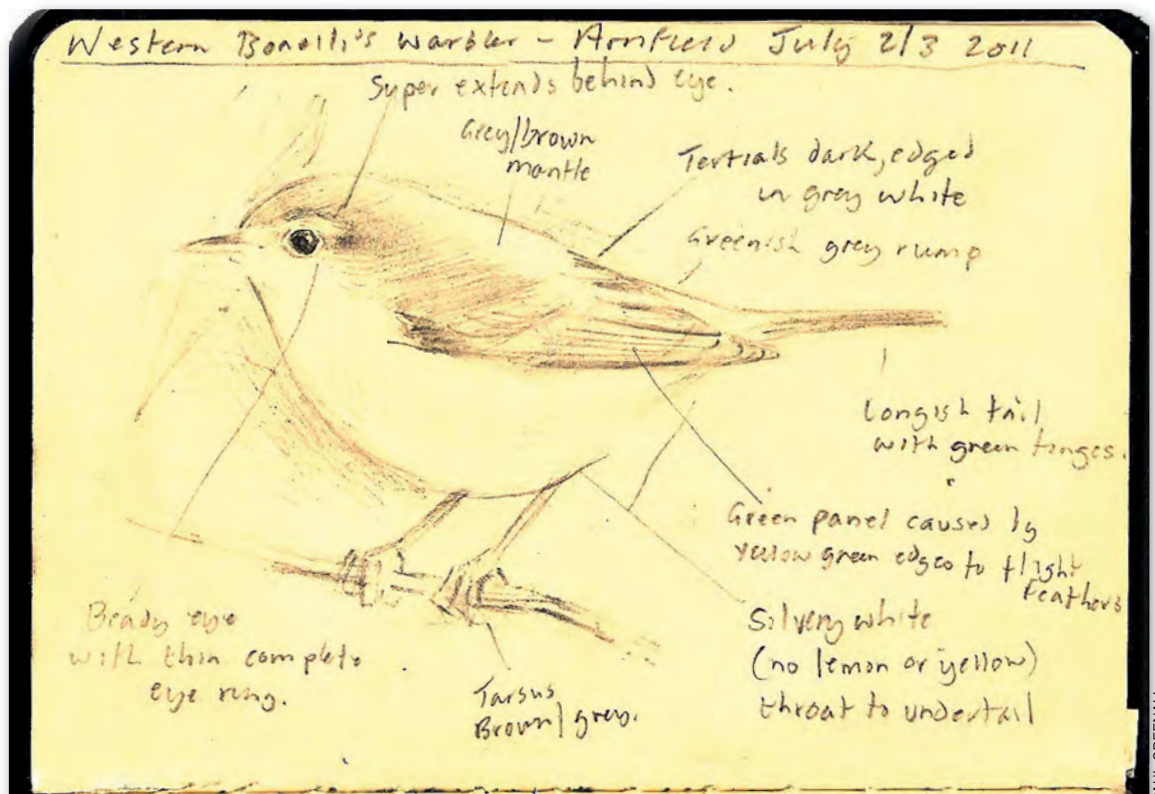
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler mostly breeds in the central and southern Balkans, western Turkey and few other spots in the northern Middle East, and winters – as far as is known – in the eastern Sahel region just south of the Sahara desert. It can be seen on passage on both sides of the Red Sea, wandering across Arabia as far as Kuwait, where this vagrant was photographed at Jahra Farms, a developed oasis site known by birders to attract many migrants. The greyer upperparts typical of this species can perhaps be seen here, but all plumage differences from Western Bonelli's are marginal at best.

which have been done indicate that the several groups of sister warbler species found around the Mediterranean all diverged during the Pleistocene period (popularly known as the Ice Age) during the last 2.5 million years.

In simple terms, during this length of deep time, repeated expansions

and contractions of glacial ice shelves across Europe isolated populations of warblers in 'refugia'. As each population was forced apart by these immense partitions of ice, they evolved in isolation, becoming different enough to be competitive, reproductively isolated forms when their ranges met again after the

ice withdrew. Some warbler pairs – for example, Garden Warbler and Blackcap – evolved more than others but several, including the two Bonelli's warblers, remained physically similar enough to create headaches for ornithologists and birders alike, even if the birds themselves were able to distinguish their congeners.



A field sketch of the Western Bonelli's Warbler at Arnfield Reservoir, Derbyshire, which was present from 2-28 July 2011. The ID was unassailable as the bird was a singing male holding territory. Who knows, with the species' gradual northward spread into northern France (it has even bred in The Netherlands), one might indeed attract a mate in Britain in the not-too-distant future.



These single specimens of Western Bonelli's Warbler (right-hand bird in each pairing) and Eastern Bonelli's Warbler (left-hand bird in each pairing) demonstrate their extreme similarities, but differences can be seen with care. Particularly notable in the dorsal view (left pairing) is the brighter green rump of Western Bonelli's, while the slightly stronger bill of Eastern Bonelli's can perhaps be judged in the profile and dorsal views.



With 72 records of indeterminate Bonelli's warblers remaining on the books, observers are always keen to put an accurate name to a sighting. This 'old school' Western Bonelli's Warbler at Filey, North Yorkshire, in September 1992 shows a brownish tinge to its upperparts that might lead to thoughts of Eastern Bonelli's, but the bird revealed its true identity by calling.

### Cryptic assignation

Many of the records of indeterminate Bonelli's came from a time when the two forms were considered the same species, and there was less necessity to try to assign them to subspecies. Some may never have called, while the physical differences are certainly tricky to quantify in the field or even in the hand.

Even so, species-level taxonomy of the two forms is well supported by a genetic difference of up to 8.6 per cent, just 0.1 per cent more than their sister species, Wood Warbler. While the calls also diverge, the plumage of *bonelli* and *orientalis* is confoundingly similar, and their songs are also hard to tell apart. The two were officially split by the British Ornithologists' Union in 1996, and while there were no accepted records of Eastern Bonelli's at the time, the Rarities Committee considered all unassigned Bonelli's warbler records to be Western; this position changed after 1999, when the first Eastern was accepted.

To the extent that a trend can be discerned from five records, Eastern's timing of occurrence overlaps completely that of Western. This shows a small number of records between mid-April and June, but with most appearing between August and November. There is a clear peak at the end of August and beginning of September, presumably as birds disperse after breeding. The presence of a large breeding population

of Western Bonelli's Warbler just 100 miles or so south of the English Channel, following a 20th-century range expansion, probably explains the species' modern frequency as a typical overshoot (though this proximity might be expected to produce more records than it does).

Spring records tend to be almost solely in the south, while autumn birds occur on the south and east coasts, and primarily in the South-West. Very few records have occurred inland, and annual records fluctuate with a slight increase to date since 1970, if non-specific Bonelli's are included in the figures. There are about four records per year of 'Bonelli's warblers', so it remains a very rare species pair. Awareness of the subtle ID criteria has resulted in fewer birds eluding a label but, even so, four birds from the last decade remain indeterminate.

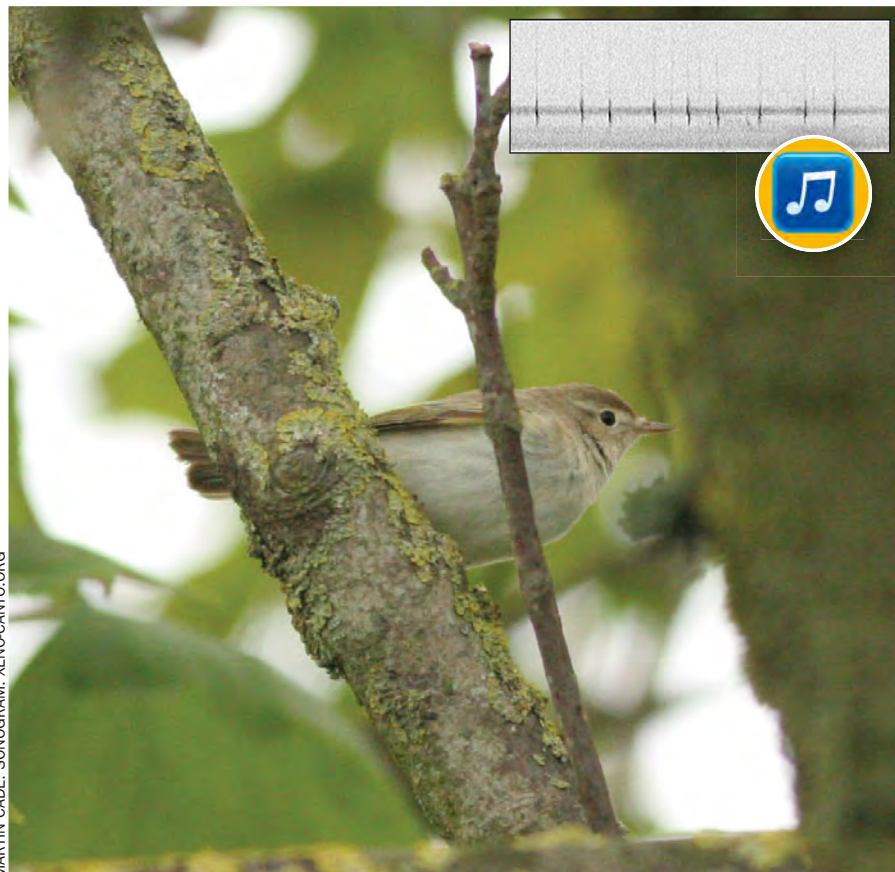
Eastern Bonelli's Warbler has a far smaller world population (estimated at 1 per cent of that of Western Bonelli's) and is found much further away, which explains its extreme rarity in Britain.

The differences between the two species remain a real test of birding application and skill, though Western



JOE STOCKWELL. SONOGRAM: XENO-CANTO.ORG

August 2014 produced the fifth record of Western Bonelli's Warbler for Portland, Dorset, but the first since 1976. The pale lores, complete eyering, pure white underparts and unworn green edges to the wing feathers are all indicative of Western Bonelli's, but measurements in the hand and calls are much more conclusive for identification – check out the sonogram (inset) for a visual representation of its distinctive hooeet. A sixth bird was trapped and ringed there later in August this year.



MARTIN CADE. SONOGRAM: XENO-CANTO.ORG

Portland, Dorset, has also produced Eastern Bonelli's Warbler, with this showy bird present for just one day on 1 May 2009, shortly after a Collared Flycatcher was also found. It called fairly regularly, enabling many mainland British birders to finally get to grips with the species – note the sonogram (inset) which accentuates the differences of Eastern's chip call from Western's hooeet (see above).

Bonelli's is just frequent enough to be a feasible self-found rarity for the committed birder. Chances will be maximised by searching coastal wooded habitat in the South-West, particularly on Scilly (though, strangely, there are just three Channel Islands records, despite these outposts being closer to the home range).

The canny will be prepared for an Eastern Bonelli's, but suspicions are only realistically likely to be raised if the bird calls. Good luck! ■

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# East moves west

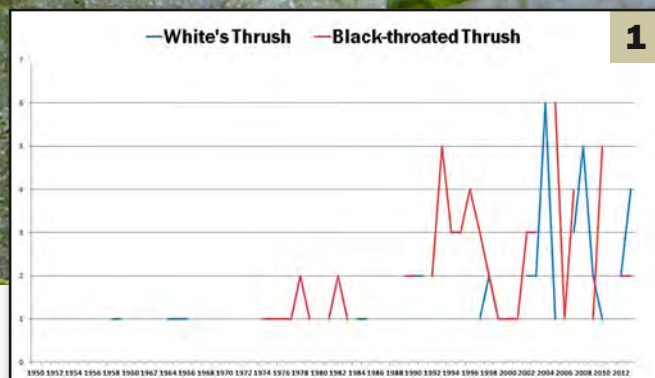


With the migration season truly upon us, many birders will be spending as much time out in the field as they can, searching for those much-prized Siberian gems. **David Callahan** looks at where these species come from and their changing fortunes over the years.

JIM NICOLSON

1

**1** This White's Thrush, at Mainland, Shetland, on 30 September 2014 was one of at least three present in Britain last year, about average for this century (see the BirdGuides.com graph right). White's Thrush occurrences are roughly mirrored by Black-throated Thrush in date and number.



**A**mong the most anticipated movements in the birding calendar are the autumn arrivals of scarce and rare passerine migrants derived from populations of species largely breeding in Siberia – 'Sibes' as birding slang would commonly have it.

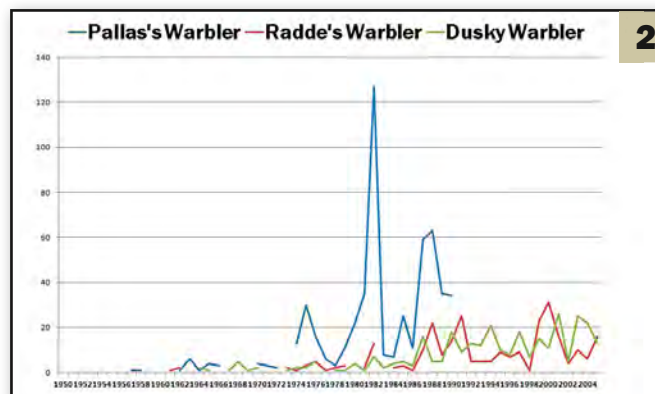
These warblers, thrushes, chats, wagtails, pipits and buntings have travelled a very long way, sometimes up to 10,000 miles. Part of their popularity among British birders is the fact that most people will never get to visit such a remote area, so these lost birds

represent the only chance for many to see such highly desired species. That said, some are now annual in numbers or have turned up often enough for their occurrence patterns to be meaningful. Furthermore, the statistics also reflect the population changes and range

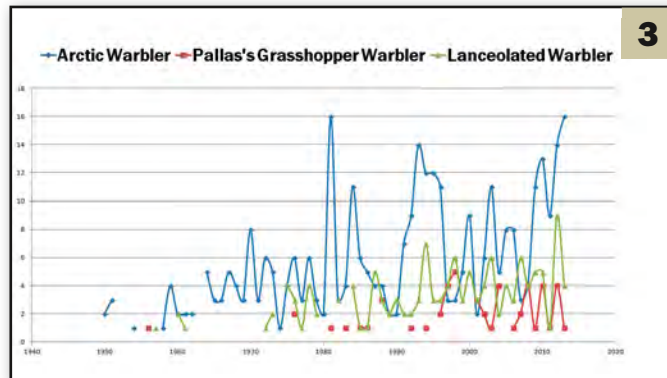


2

**2** This Radde's Warbler in its winter quarters at Kaeng Krachan NP, Thailand, in November 2011 was lucky enough not have been blown off course. It has slowly risen in occurrence in tandem with Dusky Warbler, but Pallas's Warbler has radically increased despite roughly sharing their ranges.



NEIL BOWMAN



**3** In recent years, Lanceolated Warbler – like this bird on Fair Isle, Shetland, last September – has increased at roughly the same rate as Pallas's Grasshopper and, less intuitively, Arctic Warbler. Arctic Warbler is the only one of the three species that is known to have increased its breeding range to any significant extent.

expansions and contractions of these lost eastern migrants.

Charting the fortunes of these birds since 1950 – the year the Rarities Committee takes as the modern threshold, thus using the most complete set of accepted records – might give us an idea of what is likely to turn up this autumn, as well as possibly revealing or reflecting each species' status in its home range. It is difficult to determine which

birds originate wholly from Siberia, as several species which occur in Asia – such as Desert and Isabelline Wheatears, or Tawny Pipit – are also distributed in the Middle East and elsewhere, and certainly not all British records can have their origins precisely ascertained. That said, the figures should give us a good 'rule of thumb' regarding the changing fortunes of 'classic' Sibes – those with 50 or more accepted records since 1950.

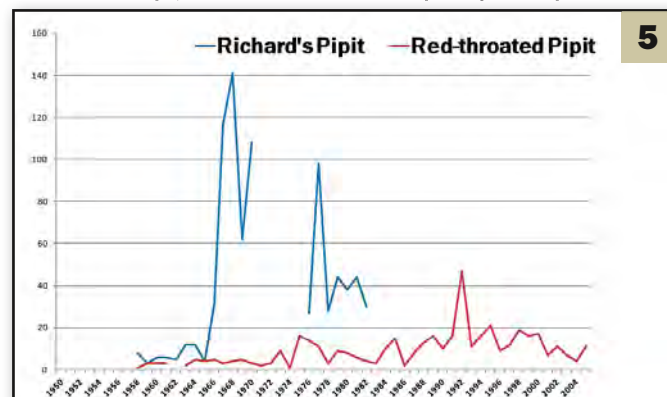
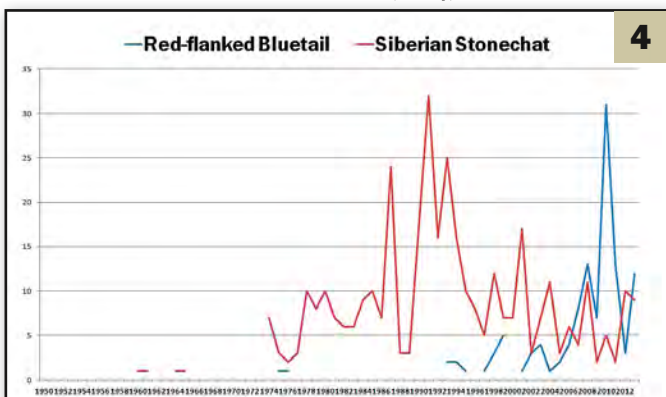
### Onwards and upwards

The general trend of these mainly northern and eastern Asian species is of an increase in records, though numbers of all naturally fluctuate over time. There are potentially several influential factors involved in these upward trends, though it seems unlikely that a substantial increase in breeding pairs has been seen in many of them. Observatory data provide a reliable 'constant-effort' yardstick of the increases (and, indeed, decreases) of these



**4** The increase in Red-flanked Bluetail records in Britain has been phenomenal, but was matched previously almost exactly by that of Siberian Stonechat. Bluetail's recent expansion may insure it against the fairly rapid decline in occurrences experienced by the stonechat, however. This Red-flanked Bluetail was on St Martin's, Scilly, on 20 October 2010.

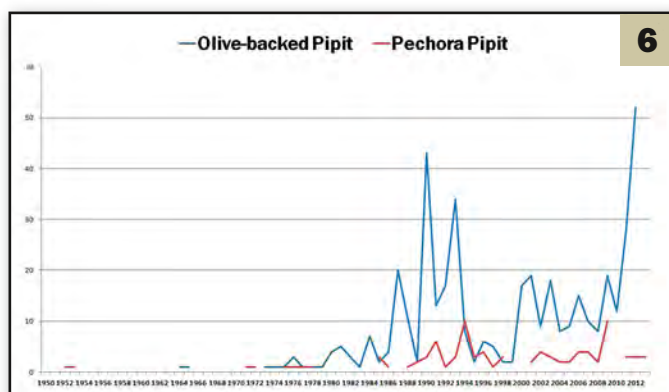
**5** One of the best sites for Richard's Pipit in Britain is still the airport on St Mary's, Scilly, where this bird was in October 2003. Not considered by the Rarities Committee since 1982 (as indicated by the graph below), this is a species which has now expanded its wintering range to parts of south-west Europe, a feat that Red-throated Pipit may also repeat.





JAMES LOWEN

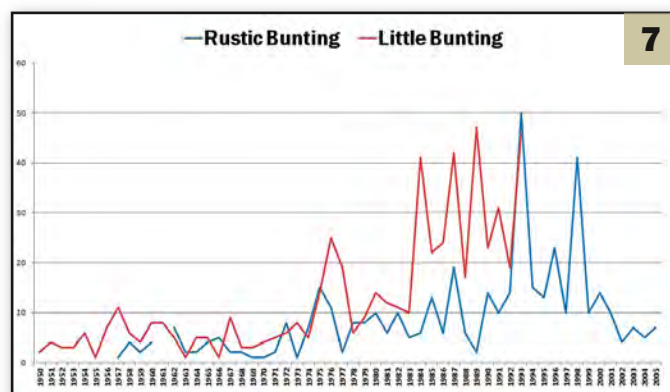
**6** Peaking first in the early 1990s, Olive-backed Pipit – like this bird on Fair Isle in September 2014 – has shown a suggestion of expanding its winter range to the south-west of the Western Palearctic. Its peaks are mimicked on a smaller scale by the much rarer Pechora Pipit.



species since 1950, as these sites have been manned continuously. Their recorded evidence shows a marked increase in appearances of most of these species, along with commoner Sibes such as Yellow-browed Warbler. And anecdotal evidence should not be discounted: an increase in the popularity of birding and observer awareness of how to find rarities and identify them must have had an effect on figures, and this could be down to the prevalent number of good identification guides, greater availability of optics and the use of cars, all of which occurred mostly after the Second World War.

The sheer numbers of individuals of certain species being recorded in Britain must be significant, particularly in examples such as Pallas's Warbler and Olive-backed Pipit. A guide to the trends can be seen in one 'litmus test' species: Yellow-browed Warbler. This is very much a breeding bird of the Siberian taiga, now nesting just west of the Ural ridge; it winters in South-East Asia. The species often gets lost, and is by far the most numerous eastern 'vagrant' in Europe, having increased in number substantially since 1950. Its migration period from mid-September to late October means that

**7** Rustic Bunting at Skaw, Shetland, in May 2014. This species' occurrences have been gradually falling, unlike Little Bunting's which have increased to the extent of it becoming a scarcity. This year, Rustic has returned to being assessed by the Rarities Committee once more.



it is an indicator species of which rarer birds may be due to arrive in the right conditions.

Interestingly, vagrant eastern species in Europe tend to begin appearing quite close to the start of their natural migration timings, indicating that the long route they take may well be hurried along by weather conditions. Additionally, the birds may well be disorientated, with learned and innate migratory knowledge and instincts in progressive disarray as they travel.

## Interlinked fortunes

With almost all of our most frequently



recorded 'Sibes' undergoing a notable increase in occurrences since around 1980, it is reasonable to assume that the same factors may have influenced this phenomenon.

Many changes in weather are influenced by climate change, which may have opened up new potential migration routes and wintering areas, as well as altering the effects, distribution and strengths of major wind and precipitation events. Some formerly extremely rare vagrants such as Red-flanked Blue Tail and Booted Warbler now have breeding populations extending into Fennoscandia, bringing potentially dispersing birds closer to Britain, though our vagrants are thought less likely to derive from the western end of these ranges owing to the very small numbers there. However, it is certainly possible that, with the average mean annual temperature in northern Europe increasing, this has opened up new breeding grounds on the taiga and tundra, enabling some species to spread west towards the Baltic.

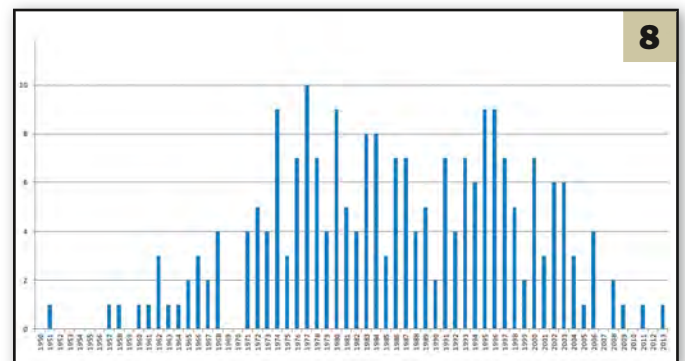
New wintering grounds have also been established, with notable numbers of Richard's Pipits appearing regularly in Israel, southern France, Italy and Iberia, while smaller numbers of wintering Yellow-browed Warblers and even a few Olive-backed Pipits have been found recently in the Atlantic islands.

It is very possible that some, if not all, of these species will eventually be removed from the responsibility of assessment by the Rarities Committee (though this is unlikely to happen to the hapless Yellow-breasted Bunting). In any case, many of these are achievable species to find for the committed birder, and are usually the highlight of a season's movements despite their increase in numbers. ■

ROBBIE BROOKES

8

**8 The rise and fall of Yellow-breasted Bunting as a Eurasian breeding species is apparent in its record as a vagrant. The decline has been rapid, and it is no longer even annual. This was the last individual to occur here, on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, in September 2013.**



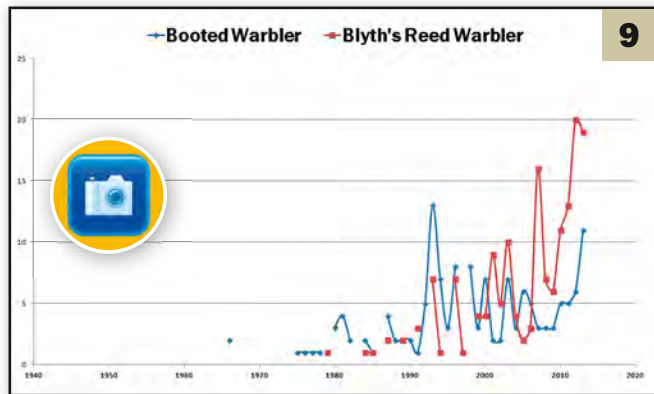
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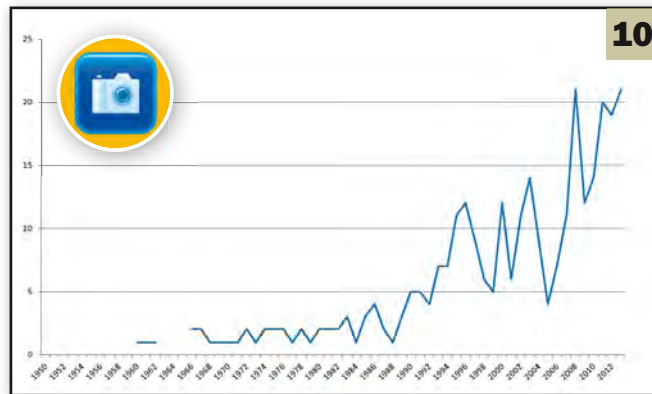
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## RARITIES



**9** Booted Warbler's occurrences are wayward but average about six per year, with a peak in the mid-1990s. It is too early to say whether it is increasing yet, but Blyth's Reed Warbler certainly is, partly because birders are better at identifying it, and partly due to its westward spread.



**10** The radical increase of many of our 'Sibe' vagrants is perhaps exemplified by Citrine Wagtail. Formerly an almost mythical mega in the 1950s and 1960s, it is now much more frequent. Greater familiarity with its plumages may have helped records accumulate.

## THE CHANGING FATES OF SIBERIAN WANDERERS

**1 Arctic Warbler** Like many 'Sibes', Arctic Warbler is considered by BirdLife to have a stable world population. It has an increasing range which extends from northern Norway across to Alaska, and it is likely that the birds that arrive in Britain partly come from relatively nearby. Extremely rare in the 1950s, by the mid-1960s it had become annual and records now frequently hit double figures.

**2 Pallas's Warbler** This still desirable diminutive leaf warbler was removed from the Rarities Committee's list in 1990 owing to a rapid increase in records, which reached three figures during influx years. Its population, too, is believed to be stable, though its breeding range is restricted to eastern Russia and China.

Starting in early October – when birds can very quickly begin to arrive in Britain – occurrences continue until early November. The first big invasion of this species was in 1982, when a minimum of 127 birds was seen, equating to almost two-thirds of all previous records. Numbers have remained high, and tend to occur along the northern edges of autumn depressions travelling in from the Atlantic with their accompanying strong anti-clockwise winds and rain, or (in lesser numbers) along the southern edge of anticyclones travelling in the opposite direction. Similar conditions also present an unusually large number of eastern species such as the more common Yellow-browed Warbler and the scarcer Radde's and Dusky Warblers.

**3 Radde's Warbler** This reclusive species overlaps with Dusky Warbler, but has a slightly less extensive range. Its population is stable, too, and it winters in South-East Asia. Vagrant birds peak in October.

Records first reached double figures in 1988, and there has been a subtle rise in numbers of occurrences since the mid-1980s. This could be in part because of better observer awareness, but with increases in tandem of other Siberian and eastern vagrants also apparent, there seems to be a genuine inflation of records in recent times.

**4 Dusky Warbler** This species breeds in eastern Russia and China and again has an apparently constant population. Like the similar-looking Radde's Warbler, it is annual in small numbers but slightly more numerous, though it may be more easily detected. It has undergone a subtle increase in records over the last few decades in parallel with Radde's, but has a later migration peak lasting from mid-October to mid-November, though the species also occasionally overwinters.

**5 Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Our most anticipated *Locustella* species – Pallas's Grasshopper and Lanceolated Warblers – share overlapping wide ranges in Russia and eastern Asia. 'P G Tips' has undergone a slow decline over the last few decades according to BirdLife, but despite this has leapt from being a mega in the mid-1960s to an annual rarity.

**6 Lanceolated Warbler** The range of 'Lancy' extends further west and onto the European Russian steppes, but is otherwise similar to Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, though its population is stable. The species' leap in occurrence happened at the end of the 1990s, but it is not known how much this depends on

increased observer awareness of this Uriah Heep-like bird, which creeps around the grass and undergrowth imperceptibly. It can be expected here from early September until the end of October.

**7 Booted Warbler** Almost unknown in Britain until the mid-1970s, this Central Asian species (which has small southern and western Siberian populations) began occurring in low numbers, reflecting its gradually increasing breeding range in the Baltic states. However, a peak in the mid-1990s has not been bettered and it seems to have settled into an average of about seven records per year.

**8 Blyth's Reed Warbler** This enigmatic lookalike of Reed and Marsh Warblers has a slowly increasing breeding population which, like Booted Warbler, has spread into the Baltic and Fennoscandia since breeding began in 1934 in Finland (where there are now more than 1,500 pairs), and the species continues to gradually increase. It has occurred in Britain annually since 2000, and despite a few lulls seems to be very much on the increase.

**9 White's Thrush** Breeding White's Thrushes occur from the Ural Mountains to eastern Asia, and it appears gradually decreasing, though its skulking habits make any accurate assessment of its status difficult. Records of this highly prized rarity are mostly restricted to the Northern Isles, though a bird was photographed by a camera trap inland at Bonar Bridge, Highland, on 31 January 2013, perhaps hinting at more winter records to come. Records have averaged three to four since the late 1990s, though there has still been the odd year with none.

**10 Black-throated Thrush** This is another breeder of the Siberian taiga. Its population trend is not known, nor its overall population size. British occurrences have leapt since 1992, almost mirroring White's Thrush, but there are still never more than six in any given year, though these sometimes overwinter.

**11 Red-flanked Bluetail** Once truly treasured as a rarity, its population is believed to be stable. It has an extensive range reaching from Japan west into eastern Finland and Estonia, where it is still expanding. A peak of 31 in Britain in 2010 was exceptional, but it has reached double figures in four out of the last eight years.

**12 Siberian Stonechat** This cryptic counterpart of European Stonechat has a steady population with a huge range from European Russia to the Orient. A mega rarity until 1974, it has occurred every year since but peaked with 32 in 1991. Records have declined somewhat since, but there were still 10 birds in 2013.

**13 Citrine Wagtail** This eastern motacillid has a very extensive range from the tundra to the Himalayas and from eastern China to European Russia, with a few breeding in the Baltic states. Stable in global terms, it has increased rapidly in occurrence here since 1990, and now regularly achieves 20 annual records.

**14 Richard's Pipit** This large pipit breeds in Central and eastern Asia, migrating to winter from South-East Asia west to parts of the Middle East, and now even parts of south-west Europe. It has maintained a steady population, and it has an extended 'slow'

migration window from early September to the end of December, with a peak in October. The species is an expected scarce autumn migrant, topping 140 records even in 1968, though it anomalously produced no sightings between 1971 and 1975. It has not been assessed by the Rarities Committee since 1982.

**15 Olive-backed Pipit** 'OBP' is in transit from late September until November and can turn up in Britain at any time during that period. It breeds from the Siberian taiga to the Himalayas, winters in South-East Asia, and has a seemingly stable population. Its British appearances are particularly linked to strong anticyclones over central Russia during passage.

**16 Pechora Pipit** Breeding from Kamchatka to northern European Russia, its breeding numbers are neither increasing nor decreasing, as far as is known. It is most likely to occur between mid-September and mid-October, and winters in South-East Asia.

**17 Red-throated Pipit** Breeding from Kamchatka to northern Scandinavia, the known Red-throated Pipit population has shown no substantial ups and downs. It is a long-distance migrant that winters in south-east Italy, Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as further south. There has been a slight decline in British records since a peak in 1992.

**18 Rustic Bunting** This species has a gradually decreasing breeding population, stretching from Kamchatka to Scandinavia, where it has actually increased in contrast to the rest of its range. Just 30 years ago Fennoscandia held more than one million pairs according to BWP, but BirdLife figures show a marked overall decline since 1980, which may explain the sharp drop in British records since peaks in 1993 and 1998.

**19 Little Bunting** This species has a very similar range to Rustic but has undergone a westward and north-eastern expansion since the 1930s, and there are now upwards of 1,300 pairs in Fennoscandia. Despite its now apparently stable population, its British occurrences have increased to the extent that it is no longer considered by the Rarities Committee. While it is less numerous than Rustic Bunting in its European breeding range, it is much more frequent as a scarce migrant to Britain, but the reasons for this anomaly are unknown.

**20 Yellow-breasted Bunting** Historically breeding from Kamchatka to Finland, Belarus and Ukraine, Yellow-breasted Bunting is now lost from Europe as a breeding species, and is listed as Endangered by BirdLife. Its rapid population decline since 1980 is mostly due to trapping on its wintering grounds in China, where it no longer occurs in the famous 'swarms' at Beidaihai; it has also suffered substantial declines in western Siberia. Once one of Eurasia's most numerous passerine species, it has decreased by 90 per cent and its range has retracted by 3,100 miles. Conservationists are worried that the species will become 'Eurasia's Passenger Pigeon'. Its decline has been extremely rapid, but with birds still being sold for the pot in Asian markets in 2013, it may take some effort to halt its descent into oblivion. ■

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: ALBORZ MOUNTAINS, IRAN, BY AMIR HOLY (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG), PLESKE'S GROUND JAY AND SIND WOODPECKER BOTH BY SEYED BABAK MUSAVI



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The extraordinary Pleske's Ground Jay – endemic to a single desert area of the country – will be a prime target, but close behind are near-endemic species such as Sind Woodpecker, Plain Leaf Warbler, Caspian Tit and Persian Wheatear. Many other highly desirable possibilities,

especially from a Western Palearctic perspective, include Grey Francolin, Socotra Cormorant, Goliath and Indian Pond Herons, Oriental Honey Buzzard, White-eyed Buzzard, Crab-plover, Great Stone-curlew, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Spotted Owlet, Bay-backed Shrike, Green and Asian Desert Warblers, Oriental White-eye, Afghan Babbler, Purple Sunbird, Pied Stonechat, Hume's Wheatear, Mongolian Finch and, with luck, White-winged Grosbeak.

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No trip to Iran would be complete without visiting some of its spectacular historical sites, and the famous Persepolis or Isfahan will leave any tourist with unforgettable memories of this fascinating destination.

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# The art of South Africa's birds

South Africa's Eastern Cape is rich with birdlife, inspiring artist Murray Ralfe to create stunning works of art. Feast your eyes on some of his new paintings.

**S**outh African wildlife artist Murray Ralfe has a particular love for observing and painting birds. Growing up in Port Elizabeth, he spent much of his youth exploring the fauna and flora of the Eastern Cape, where more than 600 bird species have been recorded.

Here we present a selection of our favourite new art works by Ralfe. Inspired by the avifauna of his beloved home, these paintings and sketches depict some of South Africa's iconic birds with accuracy, delicacy and feeling. Enjoy! ■

**1** Knysna Turaco is known as Knysna Lourie in South Africa. This oil on canvas painting of a bird in flight depicts the species' conspicuous crimson primary flight feathers.



**2** African Red-eyed Bulbul is found in Namibia, Botswana and central South Africa, centred on the Free State, North-West Province and inland Eastern Cape. It is widely distributed across its large home range.

**3** Cape Longclaw – also known as Orange-throated Longclaw – is endemic to southern Africa, occurring in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.





**6** Bokmakierie is a striking yellow, green and grey bush-shrike; the name derives from one of its many calls, *bok-bok-mak-kik*, often given in duet from the top of a bush or tree, as shown in this watercolour.

**4** The stunning Southern Carmine Bee-eater is endemic to sub-Saharan Africa. Highly migratory, it spends the breeding season – between August and November – in Zimbabwe, moving to South Africa for the summer months and then migrating north to equatorial Africa in March.

**5** Probably the most common member of its family in Africa, Little Bee-eater has an estimated population of 60-86 million birds.

## EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN WILDLIFE

**IF** you've enjoyed Murray Ralfe's stunning images, you can see more at an exhibition of his work in London. Also featuring new pieces from Zimbabwean wildlife artist Richard King, the exhibition is a celebration of Africa's landscapes, fauna and flora.

The event takes place at London's Osborne Studio Gallery, based in prestigious Belgravia. Highly regarded in their home countries, this is both artists' first London show. ■



**More  
info**

**Where:** Osborne Studio Gallery, 2 Motcombe Street, London SW1X 8JU. **Dates:** 20 October-4 November. **Open:** Mon-Fri 10 am-6 pm and Sat 11 am-5 pm. **Further information:** [www.osg.uk.com](http://www.osg.uk.com) and [www.murrayralfe.com](http://www.murrayralfe.com)



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10x50	RRP £249.99	<b>£219.99</b>
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**Nikon MONARCH 5 & 7**

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Monarch 5 8x56	RRP £719.99	<b>£649.99</b>
Monarch 5 10x56	RRP £789.99	<b>£699.99</b>
Monarch 5 20x56	RRP £819.99	<b>£749.99</b>
Monarch 7 8x42	RRP £319.99	<b>£269.99</b>
Monarch 7 10x42	RRP £349.99	<b>£299.99</b>
Monarch 7 8x42	RRP £549.99	<b>£469.99</b>
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10x42	RRP £1459.99	<b>£749.99</b>

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SLC 8x56	RRP £1640	<b>£1475</b>	<b>£148</b>	<b>£48.08</b>
SLC 10x56	RRP £1690	<b>£1520</b>	<b>£152</b>	<b>£49.78</b>
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\* FREE Cleaning Kit is not applicable to compact binoculars

**ZEISS NEW Victory HT Binoculars**

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**ZEISS Victory SF Binoculars**

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**Nikon SUPERIOR OPTICS**

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10x32	RRP £1580.99	<b>£1359</b>	<b>£135.00</b>	<b>£101.30</b>
7x42	RRP £1531.99	<b>£1299</b>	<b>£129.99</b>	<b>£97.42</b>
8x42	RRP £1633.99	<b>£1399</b>	<b>£139.00</b>	<b>£104.92</b>
10x42	RRP £1735.99	<b>£1499</b>	<b>£149.00</b>	<b>£112.42</b>

**Canon Image Stabilising Binoculars**

NEW IS II Model  
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15x50	RRP £1329.99	<b>£849.99</b>
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10x50	RRP £1375	<b>£1299</b>
10x56	RRP £1650	<b>£1479</b>
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**opticon Imagic BGA SE RP**  
Roof Prism Binoculars

SAVE £200

8x32	RRP £429	<b>£229</b>
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**ZEISS Terra Binoculars**

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ED 10x42	RRP £400	<b>£339</b>
ED 8x25 NEW	RRP £255	<b>£229</b>
ED 10x25 NEW	RRP £280	<b>£249</b>

**HAWKE Vantage**  
Lightweight, Roof Prism Binoculars

8x42 - Black or Green	RRP £69.99	<b>NOW £64.99</b>
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**HAWKE NatureTrek Series**

NEW Frontiers & Endurance 2015 Models  
See Website

8x32	RRP £109.99	<b>NOW £99.99</b>
10x32	RRP £119.99	<b>£109.99</b>
8x42	RRP £129.99	<b>£119.99</b>
10x42	RRP £139.99	<b>£129.99</b>
10x50	RRP £144.99	<b>£134.99</b>
12x50	RRP £149.99	<b>£139.99</b>

**opticon Verano BGA HD**  
Roof Prism Binoculars

8x32	RRP £415	<b>NOW £415</b>
8x42	RRP £425	<b>£425</b>
10x42	RRP £435	<b>£435</b>

**opticon Natura BGA**  
Roof Prism Binoculars

8x42	RRP £249	<b>NOW £239</b>
10x42	RRP £259	<b>£259</b>

**opticon Traveller BGA Mg Black**  
Pocket Binoculars

NEW MODEL

6x32 BGA MG Black	RRP £219	<b>NOW £219</b>
8x32 BGA MG Black	RRP £239	<b>£229</b>
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**opticon Explorer WA Oasis-C**  
Wide Angle Binoculars

NEW MODEL

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**Bushnell H2O Compacts**  
Folding Roof Prism Binoculars

O-ring sealed and nitrogen purged to ensure stunning views no matter how wet they get.

8x25	RRP £89.99	<b>NOW £49</b>
10x25	RRP £94.95	<b>£55</b>
12x25	RRP £99.95	<b>£59</b>

**Bushnell H2O Full Size**  
Roof Prism Binoculars

The Bushnell H2O Full Size Binoculars pack powerful, bright optics in a 100% waterproof package.

8x42	RRP £150	<b>NOW £115</b>
10x42	RRP £170	<b>£129</b>

**Bushnell NatureView**  
Roof Prism Binoculars

An outstanding long-range binocular. Ideal for long-distance birding or wildlife observation. Specially adapted to capture natural wonders.

8x32 - Green	RRP £140	<b>NOW £99</b>
8x42 - Green	RRP £195	<b>£139</b>
10x42 - Green	RRP £210	<b>£149</b>

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**Bushnell Trophy Cam Essential HD**  
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119774 - Black	RRP £235	<b>NOW £195</b>
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DCB-5 Digital Camera Base Inc. Balance Rail	£275
DCB II Swing Adapter	£278
TIS 800 Telephoto Lens Adapter	£435

**SWAROVSKI OPTIK ACCESSORIES**

Cleaning Kit	£30
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Tree Fixing Screw	£45
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STANDARD DOME HIDE  
Lightweight, compact, quick to put up  
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**Canon**

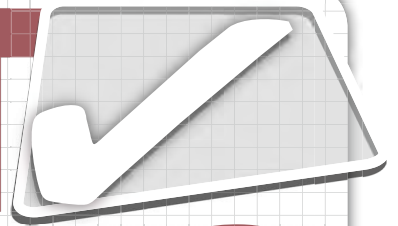
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**Bushnell NatureView**  
NatureView Cam HD  
Features GPS Geotagging

Breathtaking 1080p HD video make this the best choice for the most stunning views.

119438 - RRP £225 £149

# EXPERT REVIEWS



Your trusted guide to what's new in birding: [bit.ly/birdwatchreviews](http://bit.ly/birdwatchreviews)



## High-power superzoom

Canon's latest superzoom camera is an impressive piece of kit which is ideal for the casual bird photographer, says **Steve Young**.

### REVIEW

#### Canon PowerShot SX60 HS

**BIRD** photography has never been as popular as it is right now, and there are many equipment options available. For those who don't want to carry a heavy DSLR plus telephoto lens, and don't want to fiddle around with telescope and phone attachments, the new Canon PowerShot SX60 HS could be the perfect choice.

Lightweight, with a powerful 21 mm-1,365 mm built-in zoom lens, image stabiliser (IS), 16.1 MP CMOS sensor and built to feel like a DSLR, the camera looked good when I took it out of the box. After putting my SD card in and charging the battery, I started shooting a few species in the garden, even though it was a very dull day. Results were surprisingly good, as most of the time I was shooting at around 1/30th sec – my images of a moulting juvenile Robin were nice and sharp. It was a pleasure to be holding such a light camera rather than my own heavyweight DSLR and lens.

Down at my local patch, I had the chance to take some images in better light conditions. I decided to use the camera as I expect most people who buy it would: hand-holding and shooting

in JPEG, I left the ISO on auto and the exposure on AV, which meant I set the aperture (I actually just left it wide open most of the time) and the camera sorted the shutter speed. Virtually all of the images were correctly exposed, leaning towards slight over-exposure when faced with dark blue water as a background. The autofocus (AF) was very good and the IS excellent. I zoomed in and out across the entire range, taking a varied selection of Common Tern images.

The maximum shutter speed on this model is 1/2,000th sec, which is okay for most species and situations, but maximum aperture is only f8, meaning that on a sunny day you have to adjust the ISO settings quite a bit if you shoot manually – or just leave it on auto like I did and it will compensate.

I struggled a little taking flight shots with this camera, as it is far more difficult to follow a fast-flying bird than it is with a DSLR, but this should improve with a bit of practice. I did manage a few reasonable flight shots, but nothing that I was totally happy with.

In contrast, my tern images

came out very well and it was great fun zooming from 21 mm right up to the maximum. You can either use the viewing screen to focus or the viewfinder; the screen is a flip-type and can be used at any angle, which was very useful when I took some butterfly and insect shots. I could get down low and then just flip the screen up to focus really easily.

This is a fun camera to handle, ideal for those casual shooters of birds seen on a day out. It is easy to use, light to carry and gives very good results.

My only complaint is the instruction booklet. The 'Getting Started' guide is basic in the extreme, telling you how to put a battery in, set the date and time and press the shutter in 21 languages! Getting more information involves visiting Canon's website and downloading a PDF file of the 'Camera User Guide', which is far more detailed and complex. An easy-to-follow but useful manual somewhere between the two would be ideal for a bridge camera such as this. ■



**Price:** £322 • **Dimensions:** 127.6x92.6x114.3 mm • **Weight:** 607 g • **Focal length:** 21-1,365 mm • **Sensor:** 16.1 MP CMOS • **Max aperture:** f3.4-f8 • **ISO:** 100-6400 • **Screen size:** 3" • **File formats:** JPG and RAW

## 72 October's photo challenge

Steve Young wants to see your best autumn-themed bird images, and will be looking for a shot that really stands out.

## 74 ID covered

This new identification guide from Collins and the BTO aims to cover all of Britain and Ireland's most familiar birds.

## 74 Beginners' guide

A new book offers a bare-bones look at bird identification.

## 75 The clone wars

Is it possible to bring back extinct animals? And should we, even if we can? This new book asks some important questions.

## 75 Shady dealings

An ethically grown coffee was given a thorough taste test in the *Birdwatch* office.

## 76 Middle Eastern magic

When Chris Naylor and his new wife moved to Kuwait, they had no idea what to expect. Find out what their journey was like.

## THIS MONTH'S EXPERT REVIEWERS



**DOMINIC MITCHELL** is *Birdwatch*'s founder and Managing Editor. He has been birding in Britain and abroad for more than 40 years.



**DAVID CALLAHAN** Prior to joining *Birdwatch*, David trained as a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum.



**MIKE ALIBONE** is *Birdwatch*'s Optics Editor. He has been testing binoculars and telescopes for more than a decade.



**REBECCA ARMSTRONG** has been working for *Birdwatch* for seven years and is a self-confessed app junkie.



**STEVE YOUNG** is Photographic Consultant for *Birdwatch* and an award-winning wildlife photographer.



**HEATHER O'CONNOR** is the newest addition to the *Birdwatch* office. A consummate coffee drinker, she is working on her birding skills.



**Above:** this photo of a juvenile Robin was taken with the zoom set to 700 mm, which is just over halfway through the range. The detail is sharp and the exposure accurate.

**This photo:** the viewing screen proved to be very useful for low-level shots. This photo was deliberately composed to place the Six-spot Burnet moth to one side so as to emphasise the flower.

## STEVE YOUNG'S PHOTO CHALLENGE

# Autumn

**THIS** month's challenge should be a relatively easy one: a photo that shouts out autumn is here. It can be of any bird species, but it must be obvious that it's been taken in autumn; for example, a wader on a beach even if taken in October wouldn't be a winner, and neither would a Blue Tit on a bare branch taken in September.

I set the same challenge last year, and the winner was a lovely shot of a Wren in a stunning autumnal setting (see *Birdwatch* 270: 93), but this same species on grass won't do, as it could have been taken in spring.

You could set up a shot in the garden or at a feeding station by

**My bird table carefully covered with fallen autumn leaves makes a nice setting as this Robin searches for scattered seed.**

collecting leaves and arranging them on the bird table, while a tree branch with yellowing leaves makes a good perch. Birds such as Blackbird or Mistle Thrush feeding on berries really sum up this time of year, but the same species on a lawn doesn't, so make sure your entries have that magical autumn feel.

Send your best candidates to [editorial@birdwatch.co.uk](mailto:editorial@birdwatch.co.uk). This month's winner will receive a copy of *Looking for the Goshawk* by Conor Mark Jameson. Good luck! ■

- Turn to page 93 to find out who won August's challenge.



# Far-Sighted

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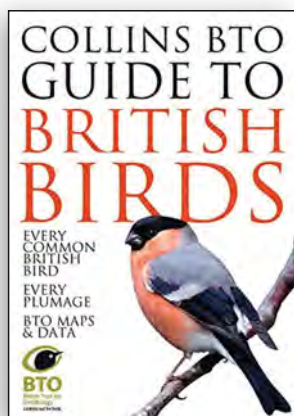
OSTARA

OLIVON

Visionary

KEPLER OPTIK

# Resourceful photo guide



**WHILE** photographic guides may not be to everyone's tastes, this pocket-sized summary of Britain's commoner species has much to recommend it to the beginner or casual birder.

Covering all of the country's regular breeding and wintering species, the photos are largely of a reasonable quality, though some of the cutting out of individual birds' outlines is a little clumsy. The book serves as a worthy promotion for the British Trust for Ornithology and follows British Ornithological Union taxonomy, so there will be no surprises in

order for most. Bird topography is adequately explained, while a section on the commonest 'default species' is helpful for comparison with those perhaps less familiar to the layman.

Jizz is covered briefly, while the vagaries of light conditions are touched upon, and there are short sections on vocalisations, habitats, migration and weather.

A neat innovation here is the maps, which use a graduated shading of blues and pinks, with pure pink showing summer visitors, blue winter visitors, and purple for species present in both seasons. This method is rather good at demonstrating seasonal variations in abundance, representing species which remain present out of season in lower numbers very well.

Perhaps the pitfall of most photographic field guides is trying to separate the 'classic' tricky species pairs. The newly publicised 'failsafe' identification features of two-tone cheek and a pale mark at the rear of the upper mandible in Marsh Tit are not covered in the separation criteria from Willow Tit, while the book also states that a pale wing



panel is "not seen in Marsh Tit", whereas recently fledged juvenile Marsh Tits can show something approximating this. Willow Warbler and Common Chiffchaff will probably still confuse the beginner using this book, while the shorter tail of Wood Warbler is not mentioned despite sometimes being a clinching feature in field

views. The "diagnostic dark spots on flanks" of juvenile Dunlin aren't really apparent in the photo chosen for the book.

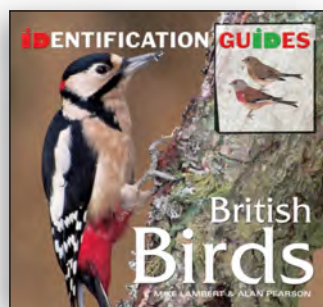
That said, as a present for the nascent birder in your life, this new guide should give enough observational food for thought to enable keen learners to graduate fairly swiftly. **David Callahan**

## MORE INFO

- Collins BTO Guide To British Birds by Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe (William Collins, London, 2015).
- 320 pages, more than 1,200 photos.
- ISBN 9780007551521. Pbk, £19.99.



# The bare bones of bird ID



**FOR** the beginner birder – and especially children – the traditional field guide can be somewhat daunting. Packed with illustrations, information and esoteric terms like 'tertiaries', 'primaries' and 'jizz', it can make the uninitiated feel like they're not part of the gang. Which is where this guide comes in.

Aimed firmly at newcomers to birding, the book covers almost 200 of Britain's most common birds. Rather than being grouped taxonomically, the species are arranged by the locations they are likely to be found in. This will often be much more intuitive

for the beginner – rather than figure out what family a species is in, they can simply turn to the appropriate habitat.

The locations are somewhat wide ranging, though, covering birds of town, garden, park and woodland; farmland, open moor, inland waterways and wild country; and estuary, coast and sea. The first two especially would have benefited from being further broken down. The final category is less common species, which features colour illustrations of more unusual birds.

Each entry is pared down to the very basics, with primary and secondary features describing the bird's unique characters. Also covered are localities, habitats and song; this paragraph includes a few behavioural traits, too. Possible confusion species are listed under Lookalikes and Their Features. An illustration demonstrating the primary and secondary features, as well as a photograph, accompanies each account.



An introduction explains how to use the guide and the book is rounded off by a list of further reading and an index that doubles up as a checklist. Oddly, the introduction uses the pronoun 'he' throughout, which seems rather old fashioned and unnecessarily divisive – the gender-neutral 'they' would have

been preferable.

Overall, though, this guide provides a basic introduction to some of Britain's most regular birds. With its emphasis on images and bare-bones information on each species, it would be particularly good for youngsters just getting into birding. **Rebecca Armstrong**

## MORE INFO

- Identification Guides: British Birds by Alan Pearson and Mike Lambert (Flame Tree Publishing, London, 2010).
- 352 pages, 200 illustrations.
- ISBN 9781844518395. Pbk, £9.99.

# Live and let die



**GENETICALLY** reviving species that have become extinct has seized the popular imagination since at the very least the release of the blockbuster *Jurassic Park* in 1993 (or even 1990's Michael Crichton novel on which the film was based).

Slowly but surely, the science has been evolving to match the simplistic speculation of fiction, and excitement has been recently garnered through the newsworthy attempts or propositions that we might be able to summon Woolly Mammoths and Passenger Pigeons from the dusty cabinets of history – via PCR machines and test-tubes – to breathe again. This well-written factual summary is very timely, then, particularly as the fourth part of the movie cycle *Jurassic World* was released earlier this year, featuring even less likely genetic plot twists.

Or are they? Author Beth Shapiro is an evolutionary biologist who specialises in ancient DNA –

literally, the still remaining (often fragmentary) genetic material of frozen, partially preserved or subfossil archive specimens. Who better to take us through the technological developments and evidentiary likelihood of recreating extinct species?

The book is playfully set out as a guide to resurrecting an extinct species – and, just as in real life, the mammoth and pigeon are selected. The process of DNA sampling is summarised, and we choose a worthy specimen. However, it turns out that we can't just use the DNA to recreate species; mammoth chromosomes, for example, are usually too damaged to be usable (and Passenger Pigeon DNA, too), and we have to reconstruct part of its genome using elephant DNA. The resulting clones won't be the same as the extinct species, merely a superficial approximation.

It turns out that herds of stampeding mammoths are unlikely to be flattening the permafrost of Siberia any time soon, and the skies of North America are even less likely to be darkened again by pigeon wings (unless the Feral Rock Doves get truly out of hand).

There is also a moral question broached by the book. As humans caused most recent extinctions, it seems fitting that we might be able to reverse our own handiwork. But even if we eventually can, should we? Would we worry about making creatures extinct if we can re-create them at will? Shapiro points out that the re-created animals are never likely to be quite the same using current methods, and also highlights the fact that we have destroyed most of the potential habitat and ecosystems that such creatures would rely on to survive. Now there's a sobering thought worth keeping alive.

**David Callahan**



## MORE INFO

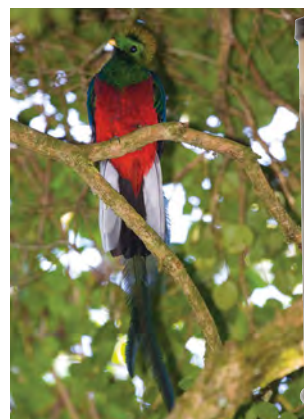
- *How to Clone a Mammoth: the Science of De-Extinction* by Beth Shapiro (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2015).
- 220 pages, 16 colour plates, 11 figures.
- ISBN 9780691157054. Hbk, £16.95.

**Birdwatch Bookshop**  
from  
**£14.95**

# Coffee with a conscience

## PRODUCT REVIEW

### Cafeology Guatemalan Roast and Ground Coffee



PETER FÖRSTER (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)



**AS** consumers, we are becoming increasingly aware of the effect our weekly supermarket shop has on the sustainability of the planet and the livelihood of those that produce and supply our food. Organic produce is very much the norm in most supermarkets these days, as are fairtrade products such as bananas and cocoa.

There are already a number of different brands of organic and fairtrade coffee on the market; however, the first brand I have come across that works specifically to support the birdlife of Latin America is Sheffield-based coffee company Cafeology. Currently, the widespread clear cutting of tropical forests to enable the quicker growth of coffee for a higher yield has resulted in diminished wildlife and degraded ecosystems.

Cafeology's slowly matured, shade-grown organic coffee is said to not only produce a richer taste, but also support tropical forest wildlife by reducing the destruction of natural habitat, plus maintaining a healthy soil base. Farmers are encouraged to protect water sources for their communities and sequester carbon by managing this forest-like system, which also provides a host of other

tradeable products such as cacao and spices.

Not only certified as 100 per cent pure organic, Cafeology has also been awarded the 'Bird Friendly' certification developed by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Centre and is approved by the RSPB. Cafeology claims the coffee will help protect native birds such as Resplendent Quetzal (pictured), which is at risk due to habitat loss.

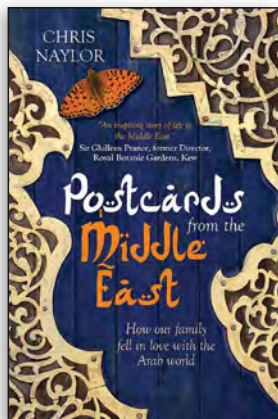
But importantly, how does it taste? On first opening the jar I wasn't hit with that wonderfully strong fresh aroma us coffee-addicts crave; however, once brewed it certainly had a rich nutty flavour of medium strength, making it suitable for all-day drinking.

Currently available online only at £5.89 for a 250 g tin (which is also reusable and recyclable) it's definitely more expensive than what I would usually pay, even for a premium coffee. However, at £3.89, the 227 g refill bag is more appealing and definitely worth that little bit of extra expense to enjoy a coffee with conscience. **Heather O'Connor**

- For more information on shade-grown coffee and Bird Friendly certification, visit <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee>.

**MORE INFO** Price: £5.89 (250 g tin) and £3.89 (227 g refill bag) • Suitable for: Cafetière and filter • From: Cafeology • [www.cafeology.com](http://www.cafeology.com)

# Understanding the Middle East



**BACK** in 1989, Chris Naylor and his wife Susanna did what many people only ever dream of: relocate to an exotic land to live and work amid a completely different culture. The newly-weds migrated to Kuwait to teach in international, English-speaking schools. Later they moved to Jordan and finally Lebanon, before coming to Britain, with four young children who had never before lived in their ostensible 'home' country.

The Middle East is never far from the news, often for the wrong reasons – war, terrorism, repressive regimes and so on. In this book Chris Naylor challenges our preconceptions of this often misrepresented region. Deliberately choosing to live among locals rather than in an expat community, the Naylor experience hospitality, acceptance and generosity.

That's not to say there is no danger. The author also recounts stories of unexploded mines, encounters with hunters and even tobogganing into a Syrian army camp. The increasing lack of security in Lebanon is what prompts the family's move to Britain in 2008.

There are also many cultural clashes. A picnic at the Aammiq wetland in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley turns out to be a minefield both literally and figuratively. The area is littered with unexploded

ordnance, while Susanna is berated for not dressing their son in a jumper (in 30° heat) and Chris is shocked at the Lebanese leaving rubbish and killing snakes. Do they not care about such environments the way we do in Britain? He wonders and realises that of course they do, just differently.

Birding interest begins with that same wetland. Naylor is a keen birder and, as part of a new government programme to establish areas in Lebanon, is asked to survey Aammiq to find out if it was being used as a staging area by migrating birds. A visit in mid-February reveals Common Cranes, White Storks, pelicans and even a Greater Spotted Eagle. He also finds hunters armed with AK47s firing indiscriminately into the hundreds of birds that have come in to roost.

Naylor's findings are enough to start the process of designating the wetlands as a protected area. This marks the beginning of a new chapter of the family's life, as Chris and Susanna get involved with Lebanon's nascent conservation movement – a cause that is still growing today.

This fascinating book provides an insight into the people, history, culture and wildlife of a region we often misunderstand in the west. It's a compelling read. **Rebecca Armstrong**



## MORE INFO

- *Postcards from the Middle East: How Our Family Fell in Love with the Arab World* by Chris Naylor (Lion Hudson, Oxford, 2015).
- 240 pages, 8-page colour plate section.
- ISBN 9780745956497. Pbk, £8.99.

# BOOKSHELF



This month **Heather O'Connor** looks at two innovative identification guides that are a must for every birder.

**WITH** autumn well under way and another summer behind us, the last thing we might want to think about is the approaching winter. However, now is the perfect time to gear up for some cold-weather birding and the prospect of all those wintering and vagrant species we are fortunate to have ascending on us in Britain.



In the next instalment of his innovative Birding Frontiers **Challenge Series**, Martin Garner's *Winter* lays down a series of gauntlets for the season. With more than 40 forms covered in 15 chapters, this new title in the series is crammed with all the latest information and discoveries, some of it 'hot off the press'.

If you enjoyed the first **Challenge Series** title *Autumn*, then this next instalment is a must.

The companion guide in another series has also seen a recent release: the **Collins BTO Guide to Rare British Birds**. Like the previous **Collins BTO Guide to British Birds**, this unique partnership has produced authoritative information in an innovative format, this time covering all the rare and scarce species that have occurred in Britain and Ireland. With comprehensive species descriptions, key ID features and clear photographs (many of which are seen here for the first time), this new title taken in combination with the first lists every species of wild bird that has ever occurred in Britain.



To order these new books, go to [www.birdwatch.co.uk/store](http://www.birdwatch.co.uk/store). Alternatively, you can use the form opposite and post it to our dedicated book-ordering team at the new address stated, or by calling the team on 01778 392027. ■

# DESTINATIONS

## ■ Ornitholidays brochure 2016



**THE** new 2016 brochure from Ornitholidays opens with a celebration of the tour operator's 51st year in business. The programme is again full of holidays to the four corners of the Earth.

There are two exciting new tours for 2016. First is a trip to Georgia's Caucasus Mountains and steppe, departing in May. Lying within the Western Palearctic, the country is home to a variety of mouth-watering species. The primary

targets will include Caucasian Snowcock, G黚denst鋗t's Redstart, Great Rosefinch, Caucasian Black Grouse and Caucasian Chiffchaff. A tour to Maine, United States, during the breeding season (late May to early June) is also sure to produce a wealth of birds. Hoped-for nesting species on territory include Saltmarsh Sparrow, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireos, Bobolink and Olive-sided Flycatcher.

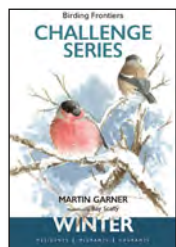
In Central America, Cuba remains a popular destination for its many endemic species, while an autumn break in Brazil should produce the stunning Hyacinth Macaw and Jaguars. Not to be missed are the company's photographic tours. Heading to either Exramadura in Spain or Romania's Danube Delta, these trips aim to maximise photographic opportunities of the target species. ■

**MORE INFO** Price: brochure free on request. **Contact:** 01794 519445 or visit [www.ornitholidays.co.uk](http://www.ornitholidays.co.uk).



VISIT [WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK/STORE](http://WWW.BIRDWATCH.CO.UK/STORE) TO BUY THESE AND MANY MORE BOOKS

## Book of the month



### Birding Frontiers Challenge Series: Winter Martin Garner

£17.99 **ONLY £16.99\***

\* This title is exempt from free UK p&p  
(+ £2 p&p UK, £5.50 Europe, £8 ROW)

Offer ends 31 October

By popular demand, the new title in this ground-breaking series continues as our book of the month for October!

Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£1**

FOLLOWING the launch of Birding Frontiers' incredibly popular *Autumn* ID guide, this second part of the *Challenge Series* looks at winter conundrums. Covering resident, wintering and vagrant species, the book is packed with little-known birds and tricky identification problems. Covering more than 40 forms in 15 chapters, much of the material is brand new, including some of the very latest discoveries. Laying down a series of challenges to go out and test this cutting-edge information, each is accompanied with concise and accessible text, photos, illustrations and sonograms. Inspiring narratives, key ID points and high-quality artwork and photography all make each challenge as easy as possible to follow.

### Inglorious

Mark Avery

£16.99 **ONLY £14.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £13.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October

Presenting both sides of the divisive issue of driven grouse shooting, the author gives a fair and detailed analysis of this multi-million pound past-time, and explains why he is in favour of an outright ban. This new title is guaranteed to stir up a debate about 'field' sports, the countryside and big business.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£3**

### Collins BTO Guide to British Birds

Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe

£19.99 **ONLY £18.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £17.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October

A unique identification guide sourcing data from the *Bird Atlas 2007-11*, featuring all the birds that occur regularly in Britain and Ireland. Text and photographs describe and illustrate key features, enabling identification of tricky species. Read our review on page 74.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£2**

### A Message from Martha

Mark Avery

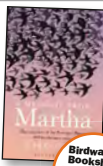
£9.99 **ONLY £8.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £7.99

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Offer ends 30 November

Now in paperback, *Birdwatch* columnist Mark Avery tells the tale of Martha, the last Passenger Pigeon. This fascinating story takes the author on a journey to discover this species, while questioning the conservation of all our bird species.



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### Collins BTO Guide to Rare British Birds

Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe

£24.99 **ONLY £20.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £19.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 31 October

In combination with its companion volume *Collins BTO Guide to British Birds* above, this new release covering all the rare and scarce birds that have ever occurred provides a reference to every species of vagrant bird that has occurred in Britain and Ireland.



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### Behind the Binoculars: interviews with acclaimed birdwatchers

Mark Avery and Keith Betton

£16.99 **ONLY £15.99**

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Offer extended to 31 October

A fascinating collection of in-depth interviews with some of our most well-known birding and wildlife personalities, including Chris Packham, Mark Cocker, Ian Wallace and Stephen Moss.



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### A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of Australia

Dean Ingwersen

£9.99 **ONLY £9.49**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £8.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 30 November

This easy-to-use identification guide to the 280 bird species commonly seen in Australia features high-quality photographs from a top nature photographer, plus detailed species descriptions, which include nomenclature, size, distribution, habits and habitat.



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### Bill Oddie Unplucked: Columns, Blogs and Musings

Bill Oddie

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Offer extended to 31 October

A collection of Bill's recently published thoughts on birds, birding and his many wildlife adventures over the years. Illustrated throughout by the author's unique line drawings.



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### Iceland (Crossbill Guides)

Dirk Hilbers

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(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October

This new book from the respected Crossbill Guides imprint will take you to the best places to see birds, wildflowers and cetaceans, and explore the spectacular geology and fascinating ecology of Iceland.



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### Birds of South-East Asia: Concise Edition

Craig Robson

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(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October



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**£4**

This new concise edition of the original and comprehensive field guide contains up-to-date information on all 1,270 species to be found in the region, covering Thailand, peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

### Nextinction

Ralph Steadman and Ceri Levy

£35 **ONLY £31.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £30.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£4**

The follow up to the award-winning *Extinct Boids*, this new book features more of the incredible art of cartoonist Ralph Steadman. This time the focus is on the birds that there is still time to save and it features some of the most critically endangered species, plus some of Steadman's classic own creations.

### Nature's Conscience: the Life and Legacy of Derek Ratcliffe

Edited by Des Thompson, John Birks and Hillary Birks

£23 **ONLY £21.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £20.99

(UK only)

Offer extended to 31 October

Containing 25 chapters by friends and colleagues of Derek, this new title reveals many aspects of this passionate conservationist's life and long-standing legacies.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£2**

### Robins and Chats

Peter Clement

£60 **ONLY £54.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £53.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 30 November

Available 8 October 2015

This authoritative handbook, part of the *Helm Identification Guides* series, looks in detail at the world's 170 species of robins and chats. Discussing the identification and habits of these birds on a species-by-species basis, it brings together the very latest information and research on this group.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£6**

### Collins Field Guide: Birds of South America – Passerines

Ber Van Perlo

£30 **ONLY £26.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £25.99

(+ £7 p&p Europe, £9 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October

This major new field guide covers all the passerines found in this bird-rich region, with all plumages for each species illustrated, including males, females and juveniles. It includes 195 colour plates and distribution maps for every species.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
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**£4**

### Finding Birds in Hungary

Dave Gosney

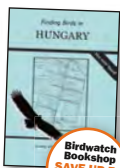
£7.50 **ONLY £6.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £6.49

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer ends 30 November

Updated for 2015, this is the most comprehensive guide available to the best sites in Hungary. Detailed maps and directions are featured, providing everything you need to find species such as Saker Falcon, Lesser Spotted Eagle and Lesser Grey Shrike.



Birdwatch  
Bookshop  
SAVE UP TO  
**£1.50**

### Collins Field Guide: Birds of India

Norman Arlott

£29.99 **ONLY £26.99**

SUBSCRIBER PRICE £25.99

(+ £5 p&p Europe, £6 ROW)

Offer extended to 31 October

Covering every species in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands and the Maldives. Illustrated with beautiful artwork throughout. Ideal for the travelling birder.



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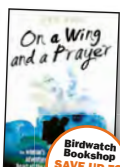
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# ebookguide



## Editor's choice



**The Sound Approach to Birding:  
a Guide to Understanding Bird Sound**  
By Mark Constantine and The Sound Approach  
**RRP/Price: £14.99**

This award-winning first title from The Sound Approach team has been transformed into a smart interactive ebook. Taking you on a fascinating journey, it will enable you to understand bird sound, with more than 200 high-quality recordings of mostly European species easily enjoyed with the simple tap of the screen. Suitable for birders of all experience levels, this is the must-have guide to a complex but fascinating subject – if you buy no other book on bird songs and calls, ensure you have this one in your collection.

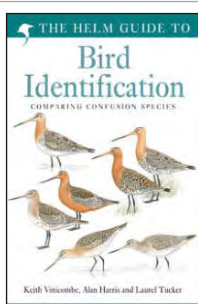
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**Collins BTO Guide to British Birds**  
By Paul Sterry and Paul Stancliffe  
**RRP/Price: £16.85**

**BUY**

Featuring all of Britain and Ireland's regular species, this unique new identification guide is designed for use in the field, with text and photographs depicting the key features needed to identify any species with confidence.



**The Helm Guide to Bird Identification**  
By Keith Vinicombe  
**RRP: £25.00  
Price: £21.99**

**BUY**

This best-selling ID guide looks at tricky species pairs or groups of birds, comparing and contrasting their respective features. Designed as a field companion, it supplements standard field guides and provides detailed additional information.



**Birds of the Iberian Peninsula**  
By Eduardo de Juana and Ernest Garcia  
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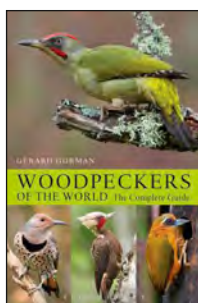
This new title is the first comprehensive guide to the avifauna of one of Europe's most ornithologically varied regions, and covers all species recorded in Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar, as well as the Berlengas and Balearic Islands.



**Owls of the World: A Photographic Guide**  
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**Woodpeckers of the World: the Complete Guide**  
By Gerard Gorman  
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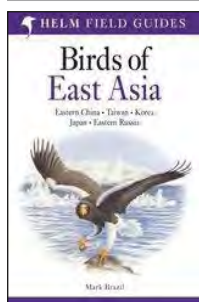
This stunning photographic guide covers all 239 species of woodpecker. The concise text looks in detail at their biology, with particular emphasis on field identification, as well as voice, habitat, status, racial variation and distribution.



**The Warbler Guide**  
By Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle  
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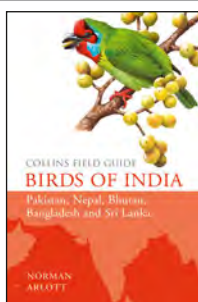
This groundbreaking guide features more than 1,000 stunning colour photos, extensive species accounts with multiple viewing angles, and an entirely new system of vocalisation analysis that helps you distinguish songs and calls.



**Birds of East Asia**  
By Mark Brazil  
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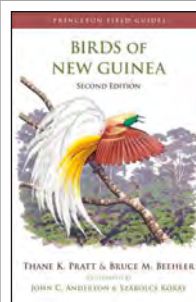
Featuring high-resolution and fully zoomable colour plates, plus comprehensive identification text and accurate range maps, this enhanced ebook also contains songs and calls, making it a truly indispensable guide for any trip to the region.



**Birds of India**  
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**RRP: £19.99  
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**BUY**

This attractive Collins field guide covers all bird species occurring in Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Andaman Islands, the Nicobar Islands and the Maldives, with beautiful artwork and comprehensive text.



**Birds of New Guinea**  
By Thane K Pratt and Bruce M Beehler  
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This completely revised second edition is the only guide to cover all 780 bird species recorded in the area. With added colour plates and maps, this book also has updated text with new information on ID, voice, habits and range.

# appguide



## Editor's choice



### Collins Bird Guide

Reimagined for iPad and iPhone, this intuitive app combines the acclaimed illustrations and species accounts of the field guide with scalable maps and vocalisations for over 700 species; there's even an optional video library. The only downside is no Android version.



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### Birds of Britain and Ireland (Pro Edition)

This high-quality digital field guide covers 271 species regularly occurring in Britain and Ireland. Comprehensive information includes multiple illustrations and photos, audio recordings of songs and calls, distribution maps and detailed text from *BWP Concise*.



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### Bird Journal

Arguably the leading cross-platform listing app, Bird Journal lets you record, explore and share your bird and wildlife observations, sync data across multiple devices and submit to BirdTrack or eBird. The premium edition is £39.99, but is a worthwhile upgrade for the many extra features. Recommended.



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### Bird Songs Europe

Probably the best audio resource for Western Palearctic bird sounds, featuring 2,833 recordings of 802 species, together with spectrograms, 1,350 photos, 600 maps, Wikipedia links and the facility to create a sightings list. It's undeniably expensive, but unrivalled for use in the field.



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This simple but practical app is great for listing your bird sightings. The latest version now starts with a blank database, allowing users to select British, Western Palearctic or North American base lists before they start ticking. Sites visited are also linked with Google Maps. A snip at this bargain price.



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### eGuide to Birds of the Middle East

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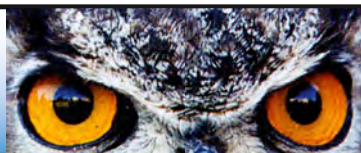
### The Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America

The contents of America's leading field guide have been repurposed in this intuitive digital version, which boasts audio recordings alongside the plates, text and maps from the print edition. A listing feature lets North American users set location to filter species.



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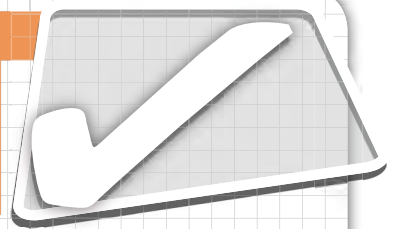
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# EXPERT ADVICE



## THIS MONTH'S EXPERT PANEL



**DOMINIC MITCHELL** is *Birdwatch*'s founder and Managing Editor, and author and editor of several bird books. He has been birding for more than 40 years.



**DAVID CALLAHAN** Prior to joining *Birdwatch* as staff writer, David trained as a taxonomist at the Natural History Museum.



**CHRIS HARBARD** After many years at the RSPB, Chris is now a tour leader, writer and editor, dividing his time between Britain and the USA.



**BILL THOMPSON III** is editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest*. He is a keen birder and field trip leader. His North American life list is 675 species.



**BILL CLARK** is a leading authority on raptor identification and taxonomy. He is the author of more than 100 papers and books on birds of prey.



**ROB HUME** began watching birds as a child. He worked for the RSPB for many years and has written several books, including one on jizz.

The best tips, advice and more  
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## 82 How to ...

In the second part of his mini-series, Rob Hume advises birders to head to a local lake to practise birding by character.

## 83 All about beaks

Find out everything you need to know about a bird's bill.

## 84 Your questions answered

Our team of experts tackles more of your avian conundrums.

## 86 News

Conservation charities protest at a proposed housing development in East Anglia.

## 86 Listcheck

The BOU Records Committee adds two new birds to its British list.

## 87 In the House

Everything you wanted to know about House Sparrow but were afraid to ask ...

## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

# Helpers at the nest

**MOST** birds raise their young to independence, at which point parents and offspring separate, never to meet again. But there are several species where the

young may remain with their parents for some time and even help raise another brood.

As many as 8 per cent of bird species may have young that stay

with their parents long enough to help raise more chicks. This is most prevalent among Australian and South African birds. In Britain, bird species that have these so-called 'helpers at the nest' include Moorhen, House Martin, Long-tailed Tit and Carrion Crow. Elsewhere in Europe, European Bee-eater and Siberian Jay are examples, while North American species include Pygmy and Brown-headed Nuthatches, Grey Jay and Acorn Woodpecker. Many species of bee-eater have helpers, and this behaviour is also widespread among hornbill species and is found in some kingfishers, especially kookaburras.

Helpers largely assist, and so decrease the burden on, the female, whose own survival rate increases. If anything befalls either of the parents, one of the helpers can stand in, or at least assume some of the responsibilities. Benefits for the helpers include gaining

experience for when they go it alone, and being around in case the territory is ever up for grabs. Some male helpers may even sire young with the female partner.

Some crow pairs may have as many as 10 helpers, which are almost always 'kin based', and a few may stay around for several years. In the case of Long-tailed Tit, it is birds which fail to breed that will usually help at a nearby nest if there is not time to lay again, often choosing the nest of a relative.

European Bee-eaters have helpers at 20 per cent of nests, and some other colonially nesting bee-eaters have a higher proportion. The North American Acorn Woodpecker is unusual in that it will form groups which may contain up to 10 offspring from previous years, some as much as five years old; some groups contain seven males which share up to three females, using a single nest. ■

Young House Martins will often remain with their parents to help raise a second brood. This juvenile bird is collecting mud to repair the nest.



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)

## HOW TO ...

## Bird by jizz



**BIRD** artists capture jizz – a bird's character – through close observation, intelligent interpretation and expert execution. Whether it is a Greg Poole semi-abstract or a (sadly, now late) John Busby pencil drawing, the best results will conjure up the bird; the implication of magic is fully intended.

The master of life-like realism, imbued with all the jizz you can want, is Lars Jonsson. At one time Lars tentatively agreed to produce a short series on the character of birds for the RSPB's magazine. He said he would begin with Robin, but it would have to wait until he had visited Britain once more, as 'our' Robins were different from 'his' in Sweden, which of course they are. The idea that he could capture such subtlety on paper, when most of us can hardly even see it, was another bit of magic, but sadly it didn't happen.

One of the most remarkable changes in recent decades – over my lifetime of watching birds – has been in our opportunity to watch wildfowl in their great variety, at close range and in good numbers. I remember going to bleak reservoirs, with an icy blast of wind shaking my borrowed brass-and-glass telescope, as I tried to pick out distant Eurasian Wigeon and Eurasian Teal from the Mallards. A Common Goldeneye or two among the Tufted Ducks would make my day.

Now we can go to a multitude of reservoirs and flooded gravel pits, many of them nature reserves, and most with fixed hides. I do rather selfishly miss the ability to wander at will, but no one can deny that a decent hide allows much more comfortable watching in unpredictable autumn and winter weather, and usually superb close views of a wide range of waterbirds. "From the troubles of the world, I turn to ducks," wrote the poet Frank W Harvey. They are good for the soul – and there is nothing better for practising that quality we call jizz.

Mallards are common, but often by no means the most numerous ducks. Their large size, long bodies, rather large bills and generalist behaviour – upending, dabbling, grazing on land – gives an obvious yardstick against which other species can be compared.

Look at the tight little groups of Eurasian Wigeon, swimming or grazing head to wind, almost shoulder to shoulder. These short-legged and short-billed birds are likely to rise en masse if disturbed. Eurasian Teal feed among flooded rushes and grasses at the water's edge, or call invisibly from flooded willows and reeds – they tend to look very dark, but low winter sun makes their colours really sing. You might find a late migrant Garganey among them – subtle, on jizz, but

best picked out by the slightly different 'look', then confirmed by head and wing patterns.

Gadwalls look different from Mallards, but why, exactly? That slightly slimmer bill appears a bit more 'stuck on' against a steeper forehead and chunkier head, although there's always an exception to prove the rule.

Northern Shovelers have such big bills, combined with low-slung shoulders almost awash as they feed, that they should be easy, but females may be overlooked quite easily at a distance. When standing, Mallards look long and low slung, with evenly deep bellies, while Northern Shovelers have deeper chests tapered back to higher tails, more tear-drop shaped.

Northern Pintails, so long and elegant, have surprisingly heavy bodies when they are hauled out on the bank, with slim necks and long bills.

Diving ducks present different

challenges. Tufteds dive frequently all day, while Common Pochards – a bit bigger and longer – tend to sleep most of the day. A female Tufted-type in with these, as big and broad as a Common Pochard but with a wide bill and high, steep forehead, might be worth a look, as it could be an inland Greater Scaup.

Scattered around a lake, looking dark, round backed and round headed, but diving out of sight with infuriating frequency, may be Common Goldeneyes – but at times they gather in a little flock and sleep, heads back, backs high, tails surprisingly long and raised.

So, a local lake with its mixture of ducks is the place to go for autumn jizz practice sessions. But don't neglect the local Robin – and think how it might differ, just a bit, from the shyer, less confident Robin abroad. **Rob Hume** ■



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)



STEVE YOUNG (WWW.BIRDSONFILM.COM)



TONY HISGETT (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

Most birders have easy access to ducks on a local pond or reservoir and many species are particularly confiding, making them especially good for practising the study of jizz. The ubiquitous Mallard (top) makes a good comparison for other species, which can appear surprisingly similar in juvenile, female or eclipse male plumages. Eurasian Teal (above left), for example, along with its size difference, tends to feed at the water's edge rather than grazing on land, while Gadwall (above right) presents more of a challenge with subtle jizz distinctions.

## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

# Billing information



CARLOS BOCOS

**A Hawfinch's distinctive, metallic-looking bill is specially adapted to provide access to one of its favourite foods: the central kernel of large, hard seeds found in fruits such as cherries and even plums.**

**APART** from marvelling at the many adaptations of birds' bills for feeding, most birders pay little attention to this part of a bird. While feather detail may form the most important element of a bird in terms of identification, looking at beaks can also reveal a lot. Once fully grown, beaks are thought of as static and unchanging, and for many birds this will seem to be the case. In fact, though, beaks continually grow and may change with the season, or with the age of a bird.

The colour of a bird's beak comes from the pigments it contains, usually melanins and carotenoids. The outer layer of the beak is made of keratin which forms a translucent horny sheath, called the rhamphotheca, which contains some pigments and is always growing. A thin dermal layer beneath the outer epidermis glues the outer layer to the bone beneath and also contains receptors sensitive to touch and movement, as well as colour pigments and collagen.

Modifications of the rhamphotheca are many. Some birds such as flamingoes, certain ducks and geese, and prions, have serrated, sieve-like projections for straining out food particles. Waders may have a sensitive and flexible tip which

enables them to find and grab food hidden beneath mud and sand. Tooth-like projections form the serrated edges of a merganser's bill and (more finely) that of a Hawfinch. Beaks continually grow from the base and wear down at the tips as they are used. Damaged beaks may not wear properly, resulting in deformed growth, often producing a long and curved upper or lower mandible.

Some birds have a compound rhamphotheca, where the surface of the beak is slit into distinct plates; albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters have these, and they are especially obvious in Northern Fulmar. Other species may have traces of these plates in the form of shallow grooves, while ducks and geese have an obvious plate which forms the 'nail' at the end of the beak. Most other species have fused plates which form a continuous surface.

A bird's beak can change colour quite strikingly. Gulls are a good example. Many young large gulls will have an all-black beak which gradually changes over several years to become bright yellow with a red spot. Adult birds can have different coloured beaks depending on the season. A male House Sparrow in breeding dress will have a black beak, while in

winter its beak has a yellowish base. The black colour is thought to be linked with testosterone levels which influence the amount of melanin present.

Some colours are produced by structural means, with microscopic collagen fibres in the dermis causing light scattering which results in blue, green and yellow colours. The bright blue bill of a male Ruddy Duck is an example of this. A combination of light scattering and pigments can produce a wide range of colours.

Like changing plumage with age, bill colour can reflect maturity, and the brightly coloured beaks of a breeding adult bird also reflect the fitness of the individual, as a healthy bird will have plenty of carotenoids and

wants to put this on show. Grey Heron beaks vary from yellow to pale red in the breeding season, while a Blackbird's turns bright orange.

Studies have shown that the colour change may be slow, happening over a few weeks, but in some finches it has been demonstrated to occur within 24 hours. Whether all of this is solely carotenoid based, or whether there is a change in blood flow which produces a reddening effect, is not clear. Blood flow to beaks can be adjusted, as the Toco Toucan uses its huge beak to help with heat loss from blood vessels beneath the surface.

When you're next out in the field, why not take a little time to study birds' bills? ■

## EVENTS OF THE MONTH

### ■ The Natural Eye



**NOW** in its 52nd year, the Society of Wildlife Artists' annual exhibition once again takes place at London's Mall Galleries.

Celebrating the very best of art inspired by the natural world, this open exhibition will feature a wide

range of contemporary work from members and non-members which celebrates the wild. The different approaches to the subject ensure a mix of the detailed to the more abstract in a variety of media including oils, watercolours, pastels, prints, drawing and sculpture. A number of events will be held during the exhibition, including artist's talks, portfolio day and printmaking workshops.

Included in the exhibition will be the winning entry in the prestigious Birdwatch Artist of the Year award, judged by a panel of experts that includes Birdwatch's Dominic Mitchell and Peter Antoniou of Swarovski Optik, which generously sponsors the award. Last year's winner was *Barnacle Geese, Winter Afternoon* (pictured) by Dafila Scott ■

**MORE INFO**

**Dates:** 29 October-8 November. **Cost:** £3. **Further information:** [www.swla.co.uk](http://www.swla.co.uk) and [www.mallgalleries.org.uk](http://www.mallgalleries.org.uk)

### ■ Scottish Ornithologists' Club Annual Conference 2015

**THIS** year's SOC Annual Conference will be held at the luxurious Atholl Palace Hotel, in the heart of Perthshire.

The conference's theme will be Scotland's Upland Birds – the Impact of Land Management. It will explore the impacts of land management on the uplands past and present, and look to the future for Scotland's birds in these areas. Representatives of the prime bodies involved in the management of the uplands have been invited to speak, and a panel discussion featuring a selection of the speakers will debate the issues. ■

**MORE INFO**

**Dates:** 30 October-1 November. **Cost:** from £25. **Further information:** [www.the-soc.org.uk/the-2015-annual-conference](http://www.the-soc.org.uk/the-2015-annual-conference)

# YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



**A** Bill Clark, author of the *Helm Identification Guide African Raptors*, replies:

"This is an adult Lesser Spotted Eagle, based on several characters, including its wing-tip formula, yellow eye, overall colour and lack of prominent banding on the flight feathers.

I blew up the image in Photoshop and saw rounded nares, a feature which eliminates all but Greater Spotted. This feature has partly resulted in the spotted eagles recently being

placed in their own genus *Clanga*, rather than *Aquila*.

There is no dark morph in Steppe Eagle, and adults are dark brown in colour, overall.

Both Eastern Imperial and Golden Eagle have more primaries on the wing-tip, while the former has pale undertail coverts.

I also considered dark-morph Tawny Eagle, of which an adult might fit, but that would also have pale undertail coverts, a more compact structure and some barring on the underwing coverts." ■

**O** I took the attached image of a large eagle in the central Kenyan highlands near Sleeping Warrior Lodge last year.

We have spent many hours trying to determine which species it is, and Lesser Spotted Eagle seems the most logical answer. However, other options could be Spotted Eagle, dark-morph Steppe Eagle, Eastern Imperial or even a wandering Golden Eagle from the resident population in the Bale Mountains of southern Ethiopia. We would be delighted if you could give us an answer.

Graham and Carla Goodall, via email

**O** These three 'LBJs' (little brown jobs) were found at the Salton Sea, California, USA, at the end of January. My limited knowledge of the more nondescript members of the North American avifauna has been overwhelmed by attempting to identify these beauties, so if you can offer any enlightenment I would be appreciative.

**1** The slender bill is suggestive of a gnatcatcher species, and although these are described in the books as uncommon to common at the Salton Sea in winter, nothing else quite fits the bill.

**2** Presumably a sparrow: the US Fish and Wildlife Service's local listing of watchable wildlife indicates Lincoln's and Savannah as the more likely candidates in the area.

**3** I am inclined towards Plain Titmouse, particularly the coastal variant with a brown crown, but I've not found any evidence of this species having wing-bars let alone the apparent absence of a crest.

I can certainly highly recommend the Salton Sea and its spectacle of thousands of Snow and Ross's Geese as a birding destination.

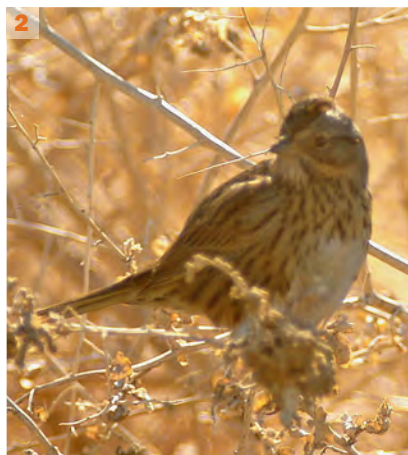
Roger Love, via email

**A** Bill Thompson III, co-publisher and editor of *American birding monthly Bird Watcher's Digest*, replies: "These are all fairly common birds in southern California in winter.

**1** This is an Orange-crowned Warbler, which can be identified by its mostly plain greenish plumage and yellow eyering. The wing-bars indicate that it is an immature bird.

**2** This bird is a Lincoln's Sparrow, which is like a more diminutive version of Song Sparrow, with a greyer tinge and finer, more defined streaking on its back, chest and flanks.

**3** This is a first-winter White-crowned Sparrow of the distinctive western population. Note the completely pink bill, brown head stripes, grey head and breast colour, and the 'spotty' white wing-bars." ■



# The Big Question: sex role reversals

**Q**In August's Big Question, you answered a query about the presence of brood patches in the males of role-reversed bird species. This got me thinking – in most bird species, males tend to be more brightly coloured than females. However, in some such as Dotterel, Red-necked Phalarope, Painted Snipe and Belted Kingfisher, the opposite is true. Why does sexual dimorphism exist, and why do these roles reverse sometimes? Gary Schutz, Lincoln

**A**Tamas Székely, Professor of Biodiversity at the University of Bath, replies: "The evolution of sexual dimorphism is separate from that of sex role reversal; although the two are related via sexual selection and population gender ratios, the relationship is not as simple as people might think. There is strong evidence for sexual selection acting differentially on the sizes of males and females in birds, and this can favour large size in males relative to females, which seems advantageous if competition takes place on the ground. However, smaller male size is favoured if courtship takes place in the air, where agility matters. In shorebirds, we showed that sexual selection can produce opposing effects on male size, depending on whether competition and/or courting takes place on the ground or in the air. Influences on male and female plumage dimorphism are even more complex, but there is a strong element of sexual selection involved in this, too."

Waders sport an unusual diversity of mating systems. Dotterel, phalaropes and most jacanas have a highly unusual mating system in which the females are 'flashier' than the drabber males. In these species the females are the ones that court and charm the males, and individual females may rope three or four humble males into incubating their eggs.

The existence of these unusual mating systems (termed 'sex role reversal') has given headaches to

**Female African Jacana (right-hand bird) is substantially larger than the male (left), as well as being slightly brighter in colour.**

BERNARD DUPONT (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)



evolutionary biologists ever since Charles Darwin.

In recently published research, Dr Liker and colleagues tested whether sex roles might be predicted by a population's sex ratio. Their rationale was that if there are many males in the population, females may capitalise on this by mating with numerous partners. Vice versa, conventional sex roles may emerge when gender ratios are balanced or there are more females than males in a population.

Data crunching has confirmed the researchers' expectations since various populations' sex ratios predicted whether a species had conventional or sex-reversed mating systems very well. The team now expects to perform further studies to investigate whether population sex ratio may relate to mating systems in other bird species. ■

## REFERENCE

- Liker, A, Freckleton, R P and Székely, T. 2013. The evolution of sex roles in birds is related to adult sex ratio. *Nature Communications* 4: 1587.

**Q**I really enjoy feeding my Blackbirds. Every day I give them a couple of apples which they peck at until only a skin shell is left. I scatter a little mixed seed but I'm not sure how much of that they eat. Also, I give them a handful of raisins. I was wondering if too many raisins are bad for them, and can birds tolerate high sugar foods? Is there anything else I could give them? Jane Mcvickers, via email.

**A**David Callahan replies: "Actually, a major part of the diet of Blackbirds (as well as other thrushes) is fruit, and so providing raisins – which are, after all, merely dried grapes – should be no problem for them at all. Raisins are high in protein and sugar, and the RSPB recommends them as ideal for feeding to garden birds in summer, as the concentrated energy and mineral 'hit' is helpful for the post-breeding moult, when garden passerines are at a low ebb."

However, you should avoid foods and kitchen scraps with added salt, and most importantly ensure that your feeding station is kept hygienic by cleaning it regularly." ■

## Have you got a question for our experts?

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in to: **Your Questions Answered, Birdwatch, The Chocolate Factory, 5 Clarendon Road, London N22 6XJ.**



**Q**I would like some help with identifying the bird in the above photo. It was taken at the very end of July in Cornwall near a village called Lerryn. I look forward to hearing from you. Steve Ball, via email

**A**David Callahan replies: "Your bird is a fledgling Common Chiffchaff. It's clearly a warbler, and just as clearly a *Phylloscopus* or leaf warbler due to its shape, apparent size and the overall green and brown coloration."

The dark legs, relatively short wings and vague supercilium (or eyebrow) confirm the identification, and it looks like it was taken at the time of year that juvenile Common Chiffchaffs would be leaving the nest, as well as being in appropriate habitat. The dirty-looking plumage is fairly typical of very young chiffchaffs." ■

# Construction project threat to Brecklands

**WILDLIFE** charities have objected to a planning application to build a road and up to 1,650 new houses on greenfield land on the western edge of Brandon, Suffolk.

The RSPB and Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts have all voiced concerns about the damaging impact the development would have on the Brecks' nationally important wildlife.

The main focus is the location of a proposed housing development, which would cause irreversible damage to nationally important populations of three of Britain's rarest and most vulnerable breeding birds: Stone-curlew, Woodlark and European Nightjar.

The proposed site is adjacent to the Breckland Special Protection Area, which contains some of the best habitat in the country for the three scarce species. It is in an area identified as environmentally sensitive in local housing strategies, because development would result in disturbance of breeding Stone-curlers.

Julian Roughton, Chief Executive of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, said: "This site is within an area of very high nature conservation value and we consider that this

development is likely to cause significant ecological harm, particularly to internationally important populations of Stone-curlew, Woodlark and European Nightjar. It would also result in the loss of areas of Britain and Norfolk/Suffolk priority habitats, such as wet woodland, which are not compensated for as part of the proposal."

Brendan Joyce, Chief Executive of Norfolk Wildlife Trust said: "Weeting Heath, which is a Norfolk Wildlife Trust reserve, is the closest part of the Special Protection Area to the proposed development. The nature reserve hosts regular breeding pairs of Stone-curlew and is widely acknowledged to be the best place in the country for visitors to view their nests without risk of disturbance.

"We are very concerned that this development will lead to the loss of breeding Stone-curlew at Weeting Heath. This would not only have an adverse impact on the birds themselves, but lead to the loss of an important site for wildlife watching, which helps bring visitors into the area."

• [bit.ly/bw280brecks](http://bit.ly/bw280brecks)



ARTEMY VOIKHANSKY (COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG)

Stone-curlew has staged a gradual but fragile recovery in the Brecklands, after a decline at the end of the last century.



## News round-up

### MAIN STORY First stage of Essex

#### coast reserve complete

The first stage of the RSPB's Wallasea Island Wild Coast Project, Essex, has been officially opened. The charity says the site will help mitigate against climate change and sea level rise.

• [bit.ly/bw280Wallasea](http://bit.ly/bw280Wallasea)

#### Kuwait declares first Ramsar reserve

The state of Kuwait has

become the 169th signatory to the Ramsar Convention and designated its Mubarak Al-Kabeer Reserve as its first Wetland of International Importance.

• [bit.ly/bw280kuwait](http://bit.ly/bw280kuwait)

#### Birds reveal love's evolutionary importance

Zebra Finches have been shown to choose their monogamous mates on the basis of what looks very much like love.

• [bit.ly/bw280lovebirds](http://bit.ly/bw280lovebirds)

## LISTCHECK

# Updating avian taxonomy

## BOU ADDS GULL AND SHRIKE TO BRITISH LIST

**TWO** long-awaited additions have been made to the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee's (BOURC) British list, but both remain treated as subspecies.

The committee has accepted the following on to Category A of the British list:

- Thayer's Gull *Larus glaucooides thayeri* on the basis of the adult well photographed at Pitsea landfill site, Essex, on 6 November 2010.

- Daurian Shrike *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus*, again on the basis of a photographed adult on Fetlar, Shetland, from 14-17 September 2002.

Thayer's Gull breeds in northern Canada and winters

on the west coast of North America and is currently treated as a subspecies of Iceland Gull by the BOU, but is given full species status by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU).

Though Isabelline Shrike is currently in Category A, a record to establish the nominate subspecies *isabellinus*, known as Daurian Shrike, was required.

Daurian Shrike breeds in Central and eastern Asia, wintering in the Middle East, North-east Africa and the Indian subcontinent. ■

• [bit.ly/bw280BOURC](http://bit.ly/bw280BOURC)



The Thayer's Gull at Pitsea landfill, Essex, on 6 November 2010 has been accepted as the first for Britain by the BOU.

STEVE ARLOW (WWW.BIRDSPRAYGROUND.CO.UK)

## In the digital edition

**OCTOBER'S** digital edition has lots of bonus online content including:

- Bill Oddie reading his latest column in person.
- Video of tricky grey shrike forms.
- Movie footage of rarities and scarcities from Britain and the Western Palearctic.
- Bonus shots and footage of of Siberian vagrants.
- Extra materials for many of the species featured throughout the magazine, including audio and film.

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## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

# Things you never knew about House Sparrow



House Sparrow nests communally. British roosts used to number in the thousands, but are much smaller these days.

**ONCE** the archetypal common bird in Britain, House Sparrow numbers have declined dramatically over the last 50 years. Here are 11 things about the species that few people know.

**1** It may have arrived in Britain with the Romans 2,000 years ago, as they are known to have kept sparrows as pets and no remains have been found which suggest an earlier presence.

**2** It is regarded as one of the most sedentary species, with breeding adults rarely moving more than 1 mile from the nest site, although young may move further distances. One subspecies, *P d bactrianus* which occurs in Central Asia, is migratory; it is least associated with humans and may be a remnant of the ancestral population from before the

species was connected with man.

**3** House Sparrows nest and roost communally. Roosts in Britain used to number in the thousands, but are smaller as numbers have declined; the largest in Britain was 19,000 birds, near London, in 1949. One roost in Egypt was thought to contain at least 100,000 birds.

**4** Hybridisation between House and Spanish Sparrows has

resulted in the evolution of a completely new species, Italian Sparrow. Hybrids have also been occasionally recorded between Tree and Cape Sparrows.

**5** Although its diet is mainly vegetable matter, House Sparrow also eats insects and has even been known to eat frogs, snails and crustaceans. One bird was found feeding at the 80th floor of the Empire State Building in New York.

**6** Nest sites can be unusual; one nest was found 640 m below ground in a Yorkshire coal mine; the birds had been there for three years. Others nested inside a sealed building at Heathrow Airport. One in five House Sparrow nests contains one or more chicks that were not fathered by the partner of the female bird.

**7** The eggs and meat of House Sparrows were once prized due to their supposed aphrodisiac properties, as sparrows were so frequently observed mating.

**8** House Sparrows live on average for three years, but the oldest wild bird was 13 years old, while in captivity one survived to 23 years old.

**9** A House Sparrow flies at an average speed of 28 mph, with 15 wing-beats per second.

**10** The local name 'Philip', once used for the House Sparrow, was supposed to imitate its *chirrup* call. Other local names include 'Spuggy', 'Spadger', 'Jim' and 'Eave Sparrow'.

**11** House Sparrows have appeared on the stamps of more than 20 countries including Cuba, Bahrain, India and the Maldives, as well as places such as Cape Verde, Ascension Island and the Faroe Islands. ■

## SUNDAY HIGH TIDES IN OCTOBER

Full moon date is Tuesday 27 October

	4th	11th	18th	25th		4th	11th	18th	25th
Exe Estuary (Starcross)	11.52	06.52	10.31	04.31	Teesmouth	08.52	03.22	07.17	01.09
Devon	-	19.06	22.51	16.55	Durham/Yorkshire	21.17	15.49	19.34	13.47
Poole Harbour (town quay)	02.19	09.07	00.28	07.10	Holy Island	07.35	02.09	06.07	-
Dorset	14.41	16.17	12.41	14.23	Northumberland	19.57	14.32	18.22	12.24
Langstone Harbour (Northney)	04.47	11.40	03.18	09.31	Firth of Forth (Cockenzie)	07.49	02.22	06.16	00.11
Hampshire	17.09	23.55	15.32	21.53	Lothian	20.10	14.50	18.31	12.51
Thames Estuary (Sheerness)	05.40	00.08	04.14	10.13	Morecambe Bay	04.18	11.15	02.47	09.08
Kent	18.08	12.22	16.33	22.48	Lancashire	16.46	23.28	15.06	21.29
London Bridge	06.54	01.26	05.31	11.27	Dee Estuary (Hilbre)	03.56	10.53	02.25	08.45
Greater London	19.20	13.40	17.50	-	Cheshire	16.24	23.05	14.44	21.04
Colne Estuary (Wivenhoe)	05.13	-	03.47	09.52	Loughor Estuary (Burry Port)	11.33	06.11	06.11	04.01
Essex	17.38	12.03	16.04	22.27	Carmarthenshire	-	18.27	18.27	16.24
Blakeney Harbour	-	06.30	10.28	04.13	Severn Estuary (Berkeley)	00.43	07.51	11.40	05.32
Norfolk	12.05	18.50	22.49	16.42	Gloucestershire	13.09	20.08	23.59	17.58
Hunstanton	11.36	06.12	10.04	03.56	Belfast	04.18	10.58	02.44	08.51
Norfolk	-	18.37	22.22	16.40	Co Down	16.42	23.07	15.02	21.06
Blacktoft	-	06.34	10.35	04.17	Dublin (North Wall)	04.48	11.34	03.12	09.35
Yorkshire	12.10	18.56	22.55	16.47	Co Dublin	17.11	23.44	15.28	21.51

# SIGMA



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**S** Sports

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**The wader that doesn't wade** – Late autumn is when  
Woodcocks depart the Continent for more hospitable  
wintering areas in Britain. Arriving largely unseen and  
being active mainly at night, this woodland wader remains  
something of an enigma to every birder, as Rob Knowlton  
reveals.

**ID special: late wheatears** – The tail-end of autumn  
is flashing black and white, at least where the last migrant  
wheatears are concerned, and we mark the long-awaited  
release of Helm's new *Robins and Chats* guide with a  
special feature on the *Oenanthe* species which could make  
an appearance at this time of year.

**Countryside and conflict** – Can conservation and  
hunting ever be compatible? North American birders and  
shooters share similar aims through the Duck Stamp, while  
in contrast recent history in an England almost without Hen  
Harriers suggests there is virtually no common ground.  
David Callahan reports.



**Painted desert** – Israel's Negev  
Desert is famous for its Macqueen's  
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and other specialities, yet many key  
areas are unprotected and some  
species are in decline. Artist Bruce

Pearson evocatively portrays the area's wildlife and the  
issues it faces.

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## Wrong way to engage

**ALL** conservation organisations need to find ways of engaging with the next generation. There seems to be no one right way of going about winning young people's attention and interest. But there is – in my view – a wrong way, and it is one that is gaining the upper hand with some conservation organisations.

This Easter, the Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) launched a Wind in the Willows Trail at its Hanningfield reserve in Essex and was, by its own admission, overwhelmed by the response from the public. Hundreds of parents and their children descended on the reserve to follow the trail and use crayons to make images from embossed plates, close to carved wooden figures portraying the characters from Kenneth Graham's much-loved children's book.

Immediately there were reports of bad behaviour, mainly of children running riot and not being controlled by their parents, many of whom did little or nothing to discourage them.

Unfortunately, the opening coincided with the arrival period for many of the reserve's migrant breeding birds and children were seen leaving the paths to run through the undergrowth, picking up branches to use as play weapons and damaging the vegetation. These events have set long-term field ornithologists against the management of the EWT with a vengeance.

Rather than spring bird song, the dominant sound was of shouting children (and occasionally adults). Hide doors and flaps were left open, and the volume of rubbish increased exponentially. A family was observed feeding wild ducks from one hide with white bread, and when politely challenged said they would continue as there were no signs forbidding it.

This summer, the popularity of the trail continued unabated, and the EWT has made it very clear to local birders that the trail is here to stay. It has clearly prioritised its duty to engage with the public over any responsibility to safeguard the protection of wildlife that members' subscriptions support.

It promised measures to discourage bad behaviour, including roving volunteers, but only one – a single A4 notice at the beginning

of the trail – has so far materialised. And it has – under pressure – committed to review the trail at the end of the season.

No one doubts that the future of conservation in general and the EWT in particular requires thoughtful and sustained action to stir a response in young people's minds. But is turning a nature reserve into a theme park with the deliberate aim of prioritising people over wildlife the right way to go about it?

**David Jobbins, via email**



A wooden sculpture of Toad of Toad Hall marks the beginning of Hanningfield Reservoir EWT's Wind In The Willows trail.

## Sketching in the family

**I** thoroughly enjoyed reading all six parts of Mike Langman's field-sketching series (which concluded in *Birdwatch* 278: 82-83) and the wonderful pictures that he and other contributors drew. I certainly wish I could draw like him.

Still, I have in my possession an heirloom which counts as evidence that someone in my ancestry could actually draw. This watercolour of a Goldfinch (right) was probably the work of either my great uncle Thomas Harper – who made stained glass windows and was baptised in 1901 (I don't know his birth and death dates) – or my great grandfather of the same name (1875-1964).

I don't know when it was drawn. Despite the mystery, I hope you like the picture.

**Martin Wood, via email**



## Patience is a virtue

**I'VE** been sketching in the field for several years now, and recently drew this preening Northern Shoveler. Only by sitting and sketching for three or four hours can I really get 'into' the bird, and ultimately 90

per cent of my birding time is now spent drawing and sketching.

**Russ Boland, via email**



## STEVE YOUNG'S PHOTO CHALLENGE

# The winner



STEVE'S challenge for August was to photograph great images of Northern Gannet.

Steve said: "The Northern Gannet Challenge was the most popular yet, and it seems that, as I suspected, many *Birdwatch* readers have visited Bempton Cliffs RSPB, East Yorkshire, this summer or in previous years.

There were lots of great images submitted, including shots of flying birds, mating birds, diving birds and displaying birds, and it is one in this last category that I have chosen as the winner this month.

Pete Garrity's intimate shot of a displaying pair of gannets was taken at Bempton Cliffs and was one of many similar images sent in by quite a few photographers, but I felt that Pete's just had the edge. The angle, composition, background and posture are just about perfect – capturing both detail and atmosphere – and the exposure was spot on. It will be interesting to see if the Puffin challenge has more entries than this one!

Congratulations to Pete on his winning image – he will receive this month's prize of a copy of *RSPB Seabirds* by Marianne Taylor."

• Turn to page 72 for this month's photo challenge.

## Join the debate online

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• News that a Scottish gamekeeper had shot, thrown rocks at and stomped a Common Buzzard to death and as a result had been fined £2,000 caused predictable but justified outrage:

Ian Smith: "Psychology has proven that if you can do this to animals, humans are next on your thrill scale. Remove his access to firearms for good. This man is a clear and present danger and shows psychopathic levels of remorse – aka none at all."

Colin Osborne: "Should have gone prison as well."

• A birder's comments that his hobby was good for his mental health triggered empathy:

Corey James Wiley: "I have some bird seed that I put outside here in Phoenix [Arizona, USA] and I enjoy seeing a variety of different birds show up, including Peach-faced Lovebirds which are not native to the state. Cute birds! I do find it relaxing and enjoyable and it helps with my depression issues."

Val Smith: "I agree: I love going out with my camera to photograph birds. I didn't realise what I had been missing while I was poorly!"

Matt Pringle: "Couldn't agree more. Getting out and doing a proper day's birding has helped me massively over the years."

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## Farnes field sketches

INSPIRED by Mike Langman's field sketching series, I thought I'd show you my first attempts. I spent many happy hours on the Farne Islands, and as wildlife illustrator John Walters said, by watching birds closely you can see behaviour you haven't noticed before.

I tried to hide away in the least prominent position

I could find, but to my acute embarrassment people seemed intrigued and even asked to take photographs of me sketching!

I was fascinated by the nesting Shags, which would adopt a guarding pose when another bird approached too closely. Those with chicks were busy feeding and grooming them.

I was intrigued by their iridescent plumage, the colours of which varied depending on whether the sun was out, and would change in an instant from black and shimmering green to purple, or to bronze with black tips on the wings. These sketches were more about the spirit of the birds rather than pure identification.

I then used the sketches to make collages, using glossy paper for the plumage.

Barbara Riddick, via email





# BILL ODDIE



## They do the funniest things

Watching wildlife is hugely entertaining, says **Bill Oddie**, and surely no creature provides more fun than that most energetic of garden visitors, the Grey Squirrel.

It has long been my contention that animals were put on this earth to entertain us. Birds delight our eyes with beauty, enchant our ears with melody, and – above all – make us laugh. I verified my theory this very day by spending 10 minutes standing by my back door watching the morning cabaret in my garden.

The Robins were living up to their recently bestowed status – two adults posing as if inviting me to take their photos – while a spotty orange-bibbed juvenile perched on the head of my plastic Gyr Falcon (actually a Peregrine that I painted white). This is a sort of rite of passage in my garden. Most of the small species instantly pass the test, demonstrating that garden centre ‘bird scarers’ don’t work.

This is true of a lot of the expensive bird-feeding gubbins you can buy. There are all sorts of wire seed receptacles and peanut cages that are exclusively designed ‘for tits and goldfinches’, but that don’t deter Jays, Magpies and Feral Rock Doves. In fact, these species get most of the food, but the consolation is that they often panic and fall off.

The truth is that creatures falling about – including humans – make us fall about. One of my favourite garden slapstick moments is my local Blackbird leaping vertically upwards and trying to hover like a hummingbird to get a stab at a suspended suet block. One of the Robins tries the same trick and is equally unsuccessful. I have never seen either of them achieve any more than the tiniest nip of fat. It must be frustrating and possibly embarrassing, but it ain’t ‘arf entertaining.

Of course it’s not just the birds. Few animals have more determination and less shame than Grey Squirrels. We have all seen those TV experiments where squirrels negotiate obstacle courses, crawl through tunnels, tip-toe through minefields and operate a Satnav before they are rewarded with a peanut. Should you care to do it – and I certainly do – it isn’t hard to concoct your own ‘garden squirrel challenge’. Sometimes it just happens accidentally, like this morning.

### Feeding time

Just outside my back door is a cluster of three feeders suspended from the lower



Are your nuts safe from the agile and determined Grey Squirrel?

“Before my very eyes, he transformed from one of Britain’s most intelligent animals into one of its most flummoxed”

branches of a small Horse Chestnut. There is a mealworm feeder, a wire box containing squashed ‘fat balls’ – ouch! – and above that a wire mesh peanut feeder with wooden sides.

Most creatures have a go at the peanuts, but very few succeed. This morning, however, I discovered it had been assaulted in an act of vandalism (assaulted peanuts?). The mesh sides had gone. I found them on the lawn, unnibbled and unbent, but nutless. All that was left hanging from the tree was the small wooden frame. A Grey Squirrel soon gambolled across the garden with the agility of a gibbon. He scampered up the chestnut trunk on a level with the feeders and surveyed the scene of the crime. Before my very eyes, he transformed from one of Britain’s most intelligent animals into one of its most flummoxed.

Two or three times he shinned up and down the trunk, clearly aware that something was different, but what? Then curiosity got the better of him. He climbed up the trunk, stopped, steadied, flexed his haunches and launched himself towards where the feeder had been. If the mesh walls had been in place he would have no doubt clung on. But they weren’t, so instead he sailed on as if he were leaping through a hoop. He managed to grab the frame with one back leg, but this only set him spinning round like a top, until he lost his grip, fell off, and landed on his back among my collection of garden gnomes.

I like to think that the other garden creatures had a good laugh. After all, their turn will come. Haha! ■



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**OVER** the years, *Birdwatch* has placed great emphasis on publishing balanced and unbiased optics news, reviews and market trends which have been insightful for readers wanting to evaluate suitability and performance before purchasing new equipment.

If you are considering upgrading your birding gear, or even making your very first purchase, then read on. Making a choice has never been easy and the increasingly high standards of optics becoming available in the lower and middle market renders the decision-making process ever more difficult. New models and design upgrades, backed by evolving technologies and leaner manufacturing processes, are furthering the trend in low-cost, high-quality optics. The range is vast, the standards are high and selection is far from simple.

This guide sets out to provide buying advice, specifications and prices for optical equipment and compatible tripods suitable for birding currently available in Britain. The tables allow at-a-glance comparisons to be made between similar products from different manufacturers, while the accompanying text provides guidance on what to look out for when considering a purchase. Armed with this information, we are sure you will be better equipped to choose the best products to suit your birding needs.

**Mike Alibone**  
*Optics Editor*

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Cover: birders in Ouessant by Aurélien Audevard. ➤

■ **Make:** Zeiss.  
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## BUYING ADVICE

# Binoculars

If the ever-increasing pool of binoculars designed for birding makes choosing the right model seem like an impossible task, then follow **Mike Alibone's** expert advice to find the perfect option for your needs and budget.

**T**aking a snapshot of what's available to birders today in Britain's binocular market reveals a total of some 550 models offered collectively by almost 40 manufacturers. This figure relates only to 'mainstream' birding binoculars, as defined by those falling within the parameters of 7x to 10x magnification with objective sizes between 30 mm and 50 mm. Probe deeper and there are many more which lie beyond these limits – particularly at the compact end of the range.

Little wonder, then, that the quest to find the optimum

binocular can be truly daunting, especially if you are a first-time buyer. The word 'optimum' is used here to describe a binocular that ticks all your boxes on optical performance, comfort, ease of use and price.

The last of these criteria is usually the first consideration for the overwhelming majority of buyers who are in the market for new optics. Roof-prism binocular prices in the accompanying tables (see pages 5-8) range from around £20 to more than £2,000, but cost is not necessarily a guarantee of quality and the relationship between price and performance is certainly

not linear. Trade sources report a recent surge in the volume of sales for binoculars priced between £50 and £200 over the past 12 to 18 months. This is thought by some to be a result of the RSPB's wider promotion of wildlife watching, as opposed to just birds.

As a reviewer I'm finding that a significant number of models at the low-cost end of the market have now stepped up to the mark in terms of combining excellent optical performance with overall quality. While this results principally from established manufacturers raising their game, it's also worth investigating any

'new kids on the block' to see what they have on offer. As an example, one £40 entry-level 10x42 roof-prism binocular I reviewed last year delivered an all-round performance equivalent to many models costing five or six times as much.

### WHAT'S NEW?

Lessening the load by using lightweight magnesium alloy or polymer bodies was innovative a few years ago, but it's now very much taken for granted. Currently the buzzword is 'ED'. Once the preserve of a few mid-field and top-tier manufacturers, from the beginning of the decade this

about this guide

These tables feature mainstream birding binoculars – widely available models usually with 7-10x magnification and objective lenses between 30-50 mm. ‘Marginal’ models such as digital binoculars and compacts are not included.

- Key to tables**
- Price: recommended retail price.
  - Weight: in grams.
  - Size: length, or length x width where known, in millimetres.
  - Field: field of view (m at 1,000 m).
  - Focus: close focus in metres.
  - Waterproof: yes (usually gas-filled), no, or ‘weatherproof’.
  - Prism type: roof or porro.
  - Guarantee: guarantee or warranty.

high-quality medium for light transmission appears to have become an integral part of an increasingly large number of models almost down to entry level.

ED (extra-low dispersion) relates to variation in the refractive index of the glass with the wavelength of light. Lower dispersion results in a reduction in chromatic aberration, enhanced colour fidelity and a sharper image. There are different grades of ED glass, with some performing significantly better than others; therefore *caveat emptor* – buyer beware – still applies when purchasing binoculars which bear the ‘ED’ epithet.

ED aside, overall quality continues to improve, with binocular designers also focusing their attention on ergonomics to enhance comfort and improve ease of use. Falling into this category, Zeiss’s new 42 mm Victory SF binoculars not only produce a market-leading image, but they have also been designed with the focusing wheel set closer to the focusing hand, resulting in the index finger remaining straight, making holding and focusing much more comfortable. The same brand has launched an entry-level range – the Terra ED, which also features a hydrophobic coating – of which a 32 mm version in grey will be available in Britain in late 2015. A 32 mm Victory SF would no doubt be welcomed as a further addition to Zeiss’s range.

Other models recently introduced, along with those destined for imminent launch, include new ranges of Frontier ED and Endurance ED binoculars from Hawke (the 8x42 model, retailing at just £190, is reviewed in the July issue of *Birdwatch*) and the newly designed Crossfire binoculars from Vortex (£159 for the 8x42). At the premium end of the spectrum, Leica’s compact Ultravid HD-plus now includes 8x and 10x 32 mm models. Opticron’s Traveller BGA, Savanna R and updated Explorer WA Oasis ranges, along with new BV and BF models from Minox, are also new additions to the low-cost end of the market. Kowa, too, has launched new BD-XD models, the 8x42 of which is reviewed on page 22. Look out also for a collection of new models from Helios and the new Tom Lock Series 2 from Opticalia, an eagerly awaited duo of 8x and 10x 42 mm models priced below £100.

From a more electronic stable, Sony has recently launched the DEV-50v digital recording binocular, which shoots both stills and videos – a far more compact and user-friendly model than the original DEV-5 which appeared on the market a couple of years ago. Personally, I await the debut of a conventional binocular with built-in image capture functionality. We have the technology, so surely it is just a matter of time ...

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Navigating a route through the maze of options leading to the purchase of your ideal binocular can be a tortuous and frustrating process. There is no panacea, no single model that meets everyone’s expectations in terms of price and performance. Your ultimate decision will more than likely be the result of a compromise between the two. Even top-of-the-range products vary between manufacturers, particularly in ease of use and comfort.

The popular specification of 8x42, often referred to as ‘the birder’s choice’, won’t necessarily suit everybody, so your likely first step in decision-making is selecting a model of a size, weight and shape that you find comfortable to use.

An easy starting point is to look through as many of your friends’ binoculars as possible to gain first impressions of what you consider to be best suited to your needs. Take advantage of outdoor events and exhibitions to test and sample as many different models as possible. The annual Birdfair at Rutland Water features the highest number of optics exhibitors you are likely to encounter in one single British location, providing an invaluable and unique field-testing facility for all prospective purchasers of new equipment.

Make a shortlist and undertake some research on your preferred models. Using the internet to gain detailed information, including users’ and reviewers’ opinions, is a recommended precursor to buying. Use the testing criteria on the following pages to structure your testing of your shortlisted models. Remember it’s better to undertake testing and comparisons on a cloudy day, or in poor light conditions, when the performance differences between good and poor-quality optics are more readily apparent. ■

Model	Price	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Field (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Prism type	Guarantee
<b>Acuter</b> <a href="http://www.opticalvision.co.uk">www.opticalvision.co.uk</a> <b>01359 244255</b>								
Sport 12x32	£23	295	140x80	91	6	Weatherproof	Roof	1 year
<b>Avian</b> <a href="http://www.acecameras.co.uk">www.acecameras.co.uk</a> <b>01225 466364</b>								
8x32 Mag F	£369	575	123x125	131	1.3	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x42 Mag F	£389	640	145x125	113	1.98	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x42 Mag F	£399	654	145x125	105	1.98	Yes	Roof	10 years
7x42 Mag F	£379	648	152x125	113	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x50 Mag F	£429	700	170x130	87	2.7	Yes	Roof	10 years
Lite 8x28	£169	395	117x115	105	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
Lite 10x28	£189	395	117x115	87	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x32 Lite Open Bridge	£159	560	134x121	140	3	Yes	Roof	1 year
8x42 Lite Open Bridge	£169	655	146x128	129	3	Yes	Roof	1 year
10x42 Lite Open Bridge	£189	655	146x128	115	3	Yes	Roof	1 year
10x50 Lite Open Bridge	£229	760	165x135	93	4	Yes	Roof	1 year
<b>Barr &amp; Stroud</b> <a href="http://www.barrandstroud.com">www.barrandstroud.com</a> <b>01359 244200</b>								
Skyline 8x42	£80	610	146x122	119	4	Yes	Roof	10 years
Skyline 10x42	£80	580	146x122	98	4	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 8x32	£90	535	128x121	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 10x32	£95	540	128x121	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 8x42	£100	650	135x125	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 10x42	£105	650	135x125	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 12x42	£110	610	135x122	77	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 10x50	£110	800	162x131	101	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sahara 12x50	£115	790	162x131	82	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 8x32	£105	540	128x121	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 10x32	£110	535	128x121	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 8x42	£115	650	135x125	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 10x42	£120	650	135x125	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 10x50	£125	810	162x131	101	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sierra 12x50	£130	800	162x131	82	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Savannah 8x42	£150	795	152x130	143	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Savannah 10x42	£150	760	152x130	114	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 4 8x42	£120	695	154x132	114	4.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 4 10x42	£120	680	154x132	94	4.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 4 8x42 ED	£200	720	154x132	119	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 4 10x42 ED	£200	705	154x132	98	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 5 8x42	£170	660	143x126	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 5 10x42	£170	660	143x126	114	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 5 8x42 ED	£270	660	143x126	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 5 10x42 ED	£270	660	143x126	114	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Series 6 8x42 ED	£330	835	153x125	133	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
<b>Bresser Binoculars</b> <a href="http://www.marchwooduk.co.uk">www.marchwooduk.co.uk</a> <b>01543 424255</b>								
Montana 8.5x45	£599	745	155x128	115	2.5	1 m/5 mins	Yes	1 year
Everest 8x42	£399	677	125x144	142	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Condor 8x42	£130	687	149x135	114	3	Yes	Roof	1 year
<b>Bushnell</b> <a href="http://www.bushnell.eu/uk">www.bushnell.eu/uk</a> <b>020 8391 4700</b>								
Elite 8x42 ED	£550	728	150x125	110	2.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Elite 10x42 ED	£595	740	150x125	104.7	2.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend Ultra-HD 8x36	£310	588	125x120	137	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend Ultra-HD 10x36	£310	582	125x120	114	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend Ultra-HD 8x42	£350	635	145x125	142	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend Ultra-HD 10x42	£375	638	145x125	113	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend E-Series 8x42	£295	635	-	142	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend E-Series 10x42	£310	652	-	113	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend L-Series 8x42	£350	666	-	142	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend L-Series 10x42	£375	666	-	113	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend L-Series 10x42 Realtree	£400	666	-	113	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend M-Series 8x42	£455	722	-	142	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legend M-Series 10x42	£495	751	-	113	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion HD 8x42	£275	690	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion HD 10x42	£295	666	-	114	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion EX 8x36	£300	582	130x120	142	1.7	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion EX 10x36	£320	558	130x120	114	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion EX 8x42	£390	690	145x125	142	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Excursion EX 10x42	£400	666	145x125	114	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Trophy XLT 8x32	£135	580	125x111	131	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Trophy XLT 8x42	£190	765	160x120	131	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Trophy XLT 10x42	£210	765	160x120	108	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Natureview 8x42 224208	£180	765	-	145	3.7	No	Porro	30 years
Natureview 10x42 224210	£210	788	-	115	3.5	No	Porro	30 years
Natureview 8x32 220832	£140	454	-	131	1.7	Yes	Roof	30 years
Natureview 8x42 220842	£195	654	-	131	1.7	Yes	Roof	30 years
Natureview 10x42 220142	£210	654	-	108	4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Legacy WP 8x42	£150	751	140x180	143	3.6	Yes	Porro	30 years
Legacy WP 10x50	£175	865	180x190	114	5.5	Yes	Porro	30 years
H20 8x42 134218	£120	770	150x185	137	5.5	Yes	Porro	30 years
H20 10x42 134211	£135	765	150x185	114	4.6	Yes	Porro	30 years
H20 12x42	£145	765	150x185	89	4.6	Yes	Porro	30 years
H20 8x42 158042	£150	708.5	135x120	123	3.6	Yes	Roof	30 years
H20 10x42 150142	£170	708.5	135x120	102	3.6	Yes	Roof	30 years
PermaFocus 7x35	£95	638	-	193	-	No	Porro	30 years
PermaFocus 8x32	£88	400	115x115	127	-	No	Roof	30 years
PermaFocus 10x32	£95	400	115x115	98	-	No	Roof	30 years
PermaFocus 10x42	£125	533	140x125	102	-	No	Roof	30 years
PermaFocus 10x50	£125	879	170x180	131	-	No	Porro	30 years
Powerview 8x32	£95	596	145x120	122	6	No	Roof	30 years
Powerview 10x32	£105	578	145x120	98	3.4	No	Roof	30 years
Powerview 8x42	£125	716	150x130	123	3.5	No	Roof	30 years
Powerview 7x50	£137	710	150x130	98	7	No	Roof	30 years
Powerview 10x50	£105	750	150x130	122	4.6	No	Porro	30 years
Powerview 12x50	£110	738	170x182	114	6	No	Porro	30 years
Falcon 7x35	£63	595	-	140	6	No	Porro	30 years
Falcon 10x50	£70	765	-	100	7.6	No	Porro	30 years
<b>Canon</b> <a href="http://www.canon.co.uk">www.canon.co.uk</a> <b>01737 220000</b>								
10x42L IS WP	£1,999	1,030	137x85.4	114	2.5	Yes	Porro	1 year
18x50 IS All Weather	£1,630	1,180	152x81	65	6	Weatherproof	Porro	1 year
15x50 IS All Weather	£1,389	1,180	152x81	79	6	Weatherproof	Porro	1 year
12x36 IS II	£899	660	127x70	87.5	6	No	Porro	1 year
10x30 IS	£525	600	127x70	105	4.2	No	Porro	1 year
8x25 IS	£399	490	61.2	115	3.5	No	Porro	1 year

All weights exclude batteries

# BINOCULARS: testing criteria

**MAGNIFICATION:** this is usually the key consideration when choosing binoculars. Most birders go for 8x, although 10x and 7x are also popular. At higher magnifications, the image is likely to be darker for the same size objective lens, with the depth of field shallower and the field of view narrower. The same applies when the magnification remains the same and the objective lens size decreases.

**BRIGHTNESS:** almost all binoculars will deliver bright images in bright sunlight; however, this performance may drop off in poor light, hence the necessity for testing late in the day or in overcast conditions. Coatings are applied to glass surfaces to increase light transmission and most of today's optics are fully multi-coated. The extent to which coatings are applied means that some 32 mm binoculars from top manufacturers can outperform cheaper 42 mm models in producing brighter images. All other things being equal, dividing the objective diameter by the binocular's magnification provides an index of brightness (the 'exit pupil') which can be used as a guide.

## RESOLUTION OR IMAGE

**SHARPNESS:** a measure of the amount of detail visible through the binoculars and related to objective size. Try focusing on fine plumage detail with different models or, for a more precise test, try separating closely spaced lines on a small barcode on a distantly placed product. Check to see if the image is sharp from edge to edge, and if it remains in focus across the entire field.

**DEPTH OF FIELD:** governed by the laws of physics, this will vary only according to the



■ **Make:** Minox. **Model:** BF 8x44.

binocular's specification. All binoculars with the same specification (for example 8x42) will have the same depth of field, regardless of manufacturer.

**FIELD OF VIEW:** the width of the field visible in metres at a given range (normally 1,000 m, to enable comparison between models). This varies considerably between models, but generally the higher the magnification, the narrower the field of view. Check out this important feature as some binoculars with narrow fields can lead you to feel 'claustrophobic'. Top-tier optics will usually have a wider field of view than equivalent low-cost models.

**CURVATURE OF FIELD:** where straight objects appear to bend at the edges of the image. This occurs as a result of compensation built into the optics by the manufacturer to maintain a flat image as you pan your binoculars across

against a cloudy sky to assess the level of colour fringing and then decide how much you are prepared to accept. This characteristic is normally far less evident in high-quality optics and is related to glass quality and lens composition.

**DURABILITY:** rubber armouring to absorb knocks and gas-filled barrels to seal against water and dust are normal protection for today's optics. Ensure your intended purchase is waterproof and not simply weatherproof.

**HANDLING:** a binocular should feel well balanced and comfortable to hold while you are looking through it, as well as not too heavy to carry around your neck if you are walking long distances. You should be able to reach the focusing wheel with ease and the strap lugs should not dig uncomfortably into your hands.

**EYE RELIEF:** you should be able to see the image comfortably and the full field of view should be visible in your chosen eyecup position. Look for click-stop mechanisms which lock your optimum eyecup position in place. The full field should be visible if you wear glasses, usually with the eyecup in the lowest position.

**MECHANICS:** the central focusing wheel should turn smoothly and without any 'play', which can be annoying when fine focusing. Ideally, a single rotation should take the image from close focus to infinity. Ensure the wheel is sufficiently ribbed and deep enough to allow you to turn it, even when wearing gloves. Check that the dioptre for single-eye focusing adjustments can be locked or will not slip from its setting.

**ACCESSORIES:** those supplied with the binocular are not necessarily the best. A broad, neoprene neck strap will spread the load and increase comfort on heavier models, but tight-fitting articulated rainguards, while in vogue, invariably take longer to fit and remove and can easily alter eyecup settings; discard them and buy a more manageable, loose-fitting, single piece cover.

**WARRANTY:** before you buy, check the terms of the warranty and the guarantee period and that the binocular is an approved British import. ■



■ **Make:** Opticalia. **Model:** TL Series 2 10x42.

a landscape. Models without any degree of curvature of field are likely to produce a bending, bubbling or 'fish-eye' effect as you pan, and you will need to decide if you can live with this.

**CLOSE FOCUS:** a prerequisite if you want to study insects, and important when you are following passerines through vegetation at close quarters. Many binoculars now focus down to 2 m.

**COLOUR FRINGING OR CHROMATIC ABERRATION:** present in all binoculars to varying degrees as blue and yellow margins along opposite sides of dark objects when viewed against a light background. View a bare tree branch or TV aerial



■ **Make:** Pentax. **Model:** 8x43 ZD WP.

# BINOCULAR SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Price	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Field (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Prism type	Guarantee
<b>Celestron</b> <a href="http://www.celestron.com">www.celestron.com</a> <b>07850 309592</b>								
Upclose G2 7x35	£50	624	121x181	161	4	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Upclose G2 8x40	£40	369	140x194	62	6	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Upclose G2 10x50	£40	765	165x194	118	7	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Upclose G2 7-21x40	£55	769	152x187	93-56	8-14	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Upclose G2 10-30x50	£65	794	178x194	75-38	8-14	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Outland X 8x42	£90	624	146x156	118.7	4	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Outland X 10x42	£90	624	146x156	97.7	4	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
NatureDX 8x32	£135	510	128x126	129	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
NatureDX 10x32	£135	510	128x126	101	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
NatureDX 8x42	£160	629	135x126	129	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
NatureDX 10x42	£160	629	135x126	101	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Traillseeker 8x32	£235	453	123x122	136	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Traillseeker 10x32	£235	453	123x122	108	2.5	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Traillseeker 8x42	£260	665	141x130	142	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Traillseeker 10x42	£260	635	141x130	114	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 7x33	£400	601	140x125	159	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 9x33	£400	670	138x125	126	2.5	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 8x42	£450	680	140x125	142	2	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 10x42	£450	680	140x125	113.3	2.5	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 10x50	£575	850	168x132	114	3	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Granite ED 12x50	£575	850	168x132	94	3.5	Weatherproof	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Landscout 7x35	£150	760	111x186	163	5	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Landscout 8x40	£160	802	130x188	143	5	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Landscout 10x50	£160	945	170x197	115	7	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Landscout 12x50	£170	942	170x197	96	7	Weatherproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Oceana 7x50 Centre Focus	£180	1,162	168x1102	-	10	Waterproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
Oceana 7x50 Individual Focus	£190	1,162	168x1102	-	10	Waterproof	Porro	Ltd lifetime
<b>Delta</b> <a href="http://www.infocustoptics.co.uk">www.infocustoptics.co.uk</a> <b>01485 210101</b>								
S 8x32	£199	535	118x130	126	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
S 8x42	£189	650	125x136	126	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
S 10x42	£199	645	125x136	99	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
SL 3 8x42	£349	667	143x126	122	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
SL 3 10x42	£349	685	143x126	105	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
SL 2 8x32	£199	580	114x120	112	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
SL 2 8x42	£269	650	138x124	108	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
SL 2 10x42	£279	660	138x124	99	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
<b>Eagle Optics</b> <a href="http://www.newprouk.co.uk">www.newprouk.co.uk</a> <b>01367 242411</b>								
Denali 8x42	£139	640	125x137	135	2.1	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
Denali 10x42	£149	635	125x137	105	2.1	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
Ranger ED 8x32	£299	545	122x127	132	1.2	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
Ranger ED 8x42	£309	615	130x147	114	1.6	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
Ranger ED 10x42	£319	620	130x147	105	1.6	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
Ranger ED 10x50	£339	730	135x172	87	2.5	Yes	Roof	Unltd lifetime
<b>Eden</b> <a href="http://www.edenwebshops.co.uk">www.edenwebshops.co.uk</a> <b>0203 318 8651</b>								
Eden Quality HD 8x42	£129	760	145x120	129	1.2	Yes	Roof	25 years
Eden Quality HD 10x42	£129	760	145x120	114	1.2	Yes	Roof	25 years
Eden Quality HD 8x32	£96	480	115x105	131	1.5	Yes	Roof	25 years
Eden Quality XP 8x42	£245	660	145x120	129	1.2	Yes	Roof	25 years
Eden Quality XP 10x42	£245	650	145x120	114	1.2	Yes	Roof	25 years
<b>Forest Optics</b> <a href="http://www.marchwooduk.co.uk">www.marchwooduk.co.uk</a> <b>01543 424255</b>								
8x32 Porro Prism	£119	595	118x155	143	2	Yes	Porro	5 years
PPC 8x42	£189	715	145x120	142	1.37	Yes	Roof	10 years
PPC 10x42	£199	715	145x120	143	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
PPC 8x32	£159	520	107x107	114	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
PPC 10x32	£169	515	107x107	128	1.6	Yes	Roof	10 years
Finch 8x32	£59	500	130x115	104	3.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Finch 8x42	£69	510	154x118	125	3	Yes	Roof	5 years
Finch 10x42	£75	510	154x118	101	4	Yes	Roof	5 years
<b>Hawke</b> <a href="http://www.hawkeoptics.co.uk">www.hawkeoptics.co.uk</a> <b>01394 38762</b>								
Sapphire ED OH 8x43	£430	758	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sapphire ED OH 10x43	£440	758	-	113	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sapphire ED TH 8x42	£360	730	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Sapphire ED TH 10x42	£370	730	-	113	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Frontier ED 8x43	£340	743	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Frontier ED 10x43	£350	743	-	113	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Frontier ED TH 8x32	£220	500	-	133	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Frontier ED TH 10x32	£230	500	-	103	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance PC 8x32	£150	535	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance PC 10x32	£160	535	-	113	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance PC 8x42	£180	713	-	142	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance PC 10x42	£190	713	-	113	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance ED 8x32	£160	539	-	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance ED 10x32	£170	539	-	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance ED 8x42	£190	652	-	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance ED 10x42	£200	652	-	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Endurance ED 10x50	£220	794	-	101	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 8x32	£100	554	-	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 10x32	£110	554	-	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 8x42	£120	665	-	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 10x42	£130	678	-	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 10x50	£135	812	-	101	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek TH 12x50	£140	812	-	82	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Nature-Trek 7x30	£70	486	-	143	2.5	Yes	Porro	10 years
Nature-Trek 8x42	£85	624	-	105	5	Yes	Porro	10 years
Nature-Trek 10x42	£90	624	-	105	5	Yes	Porro	10 years
Premier 8x42	£65	649	-	93	9	No	Roof	10 years
Premier 10x42	£70	649	-	85	9	No	Roof	10 years
<b>Helios</b> <a href="http://www.opticalvision.co.uk">www.opticalvision.co.uk</a> <b>01359 244200</b>								
Fieldmaster 8x40	£50	635	135x183	105	4.7	Yes	Porro	1 year
Fieldmaster 7x50	£55	825	170x192	105	-	Yes	Porro	1 year
Fieldmaster 10x50	£55	825	170x192	96	9.5	Yes	Porro	1 year
Fieldmaster 12x50	£58	825	170x192	79	-	Yes	Porro	1 year
Naturesport-Plus 8x40WA	£90	690	171x130	143	3.4	Yes	Porro	1 year
Naturesport-Plus 7x50	£100	790	170x190	113	3.8	Yes	Porro	1 year
Naturesport-Plus 10x50WA	£100	790	170x190	113	6	Yes	Porro	1 year
Mistral-WP4 8x42	£119	745	138x125	129	1.2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Ultrastop 8x42	£139	648	145x120	129	2.5	Yes	Roof	1 year
Ultrastop 10x42	£139	648	145x120	113	2.5	Yes	Roof	1 year
Aero-ED 8x42	£199	690	155x125	119	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Aero-ED 10x42	£199	690	155x125	98	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Nirvana-ED 8x42	£269	675	140x130	141	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Nirvana-ED 10x42	£279	675	140x130	113	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Rapide 8x32	£50	450	127x115	126	4.5	Yes	Roof	1 year
Mistral WP3 8x42	£75	630	150x128	105	5	Yes	Roof	1 year
Mistral WP3 10x42	£75	645	150x128	102	6	Yes	Roof	1 year
Odyssey-HR 8x42	£159	690	143x129	130	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
Odyssey-HR 10x42	£159	690	143x129	112	2	Yes	Roof	1 year
<b>Kite</b> <a href="http://www.alphaodi.co.uk">www.alphaodi.co.uk</a> <b>07725 081436</b>								
Petrel 8x32	£359	550	124x121	131	1.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Petrel 8x42	£379	610	145x126	114	1.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Petrel 10x42	£389	625	145x126	105	1.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Petrel 8.5x50	£399	760	175x133	97	2.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Petrel 10x50	£399	713	170x133	88	2.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Forster 8x32	£569	640	124x121	131	1.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Forster 8x42	£599	710	145x126	114	1.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Forster 10x42	£619	710	145x126	105	1.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Forster 10x50	£629	820	170x133	88	2.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Forster 12x50	£649	820	170x133	84	2.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Ibis ED 7x42	£799	725	148x127	128	1.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Ibis ED 8x42	£799	745	148x127	126	1.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Ibis ED 10x42	£839	760	148x127	114	1.4	Yes	Roof	30 years

Model	Price	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Field (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Prism type	Guarantee
<b>Kowa</b> <a href="http://www.kowaproducts.com">www.kowaproducts.com</a> <b>07904 449817</b>								
Ibis ED 8.5x50	£899	868	175x132	102	2.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Ibis ED 10x50	£899	887	175x132	102	2.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Ibis ED 12x50	£939	902	175x132	91	2.4	Yes	Roof	30 years
Bonelli 2.0 8x42	£949	820	156x127	132	1.55	Yes	Roof	30 years
Bonelli 2.0 10x42	£999	840	156x127	115	1.55	Yes	Roof	30 years
Toucan 8x42	£299	691	139 (H)	133	2.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Toucan 10x42	£299	712	139 (H)	108	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Lynx HD 8x30	£459	461	120x114	151	1.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Lynx HD 10x30	£479	465	120x114	120	1.35	Yes	Roof	30 years
Birdwatcher 8x42	£262	730	165x145	143	2.8	No	Porro	5 years
Birdwatcher 10x42	£262	730	165x145	107	3.7	No	Porro	5 years
Marine 7x50	£560	1,250	195x185	126	8	Yes	Porro	30 years
<b>Leica</b> <a href="http://www.leica-storemayfair.co.uk">www.leica-storemayfair.co.uk</a> <b>020 7629 1351</b>								
Ultravid 8x32 HD-Plus	£1,350	535	116x116	135	2.1	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 10x32 HD-Plus	£1,375	565	116x120	118	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 7x42 HD-Plus	£1,600	770	120x141	140	3.3	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 8x42 HD-Plus	£1,650	790	121x142	130	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 10x42 HD-Plus	£1,700	750	120x147	112	2.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 8x50 HD-Plus	£1,700	1,000	120x182	117	3.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 10x50 HD-Plus	£1,750	1,000	125x178	117	3.3	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 12x50 HD-Plus	£1,850	1,040	120x182	100	3.2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 8x42 Silverline	£1,570	710	121x141	130	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 10x42 Silverline	£1,620	695	120x146	112	2.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 8x42 Blackline	£1,480	710	121x141	130	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
Ultravid 10x42 Blackline	£1,520	695	120x146	112	2.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
Trinovid 10x42	£1,220	795	120x147	108	3.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Trinovid 8x42	£1,170	810	121x142	126	3.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Duovid 8+12x42	£2,130	1,045	120x157	118/90	3.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Duovid 10+15x50	£2,300	1,250	126x195	92/70	3.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
Geovid 8x42 HD-B	£2,200	975	125x178	130	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Geovid 10x42 HD-B	£2,300	980	125x174	114	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Geovid 8x42 HD-R	£1,900	955	125x173	125	5.6	Yes	Roof	10 years
Geovid 10x42 HD-R	£1,950	940	125x168	110	5.6	Yes	Roof	10 years
<i>The above models come with a Leica 'Passport' which gives UK accidental damage cover for 1 year</i>								
<b>Leupold</b> <a href="http://www.gmk.co.uk">www.gmk.co.uk</a> <b>01489 587500</b>								
Yosemite 8x30	£142	482	Length 115	118	3.3	Yes	Porro	Lifetime
Arcadia 8x42	£249	655	Length 152	119	2.3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Arcadia 10x42	£272	666	Length 152	111	2.7	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Arcadia 10x50	£300	830	Length 169	92	3.6	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Cascades 8x42	£355	649	Length 140	114	3.3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Cascades 10x42	£375	655	Length 140	89	3.3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Mojave 8x42	£475	663	Length 142	111	2.4	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
<b>Meopta Sports Optics</b> <a href="http://www.vikingarms.com">www.vikingarms.com</a> <b>01423 780810</b>								
MeoPro 8x32 HD	£529	598	132x131	148	1.7	Yes	Roof	10 years
MeoPro 10x32 HD	£550	598	132x132	128	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
MeoPro 8x42 HD	£582	730	154x134	128	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
MeoPro 10x42 HD	£613	715	151x134	117	2.6	Yes	Roof	10 years
MeostarB1 8x32	£910	589	124x111	138	1.7	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 10x32	£920	600	121x111	110	1.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 7x42	£878	890	140x132	137	2.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 8x42	£931	897	140x132	137	2.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 10x42	£942	877	140x132	110	2.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 10x50	£952	1,020	190x137	110	3.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeostarB1 12x50	£1,005	1,020	190x137	91	3.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeoStar B1 10x42 HD	£1,122	877	140x120	110	2.6	Yes	Roof	30 years
MeoStar B1 12x50 HD	poa	1062	173x140	92	4	Yes	Roof	30 years
<b>Minox</b> <a href="http://www.minox.co.uk">www.minox.co.uk</a> <b>01582 434383</b>								
BV 8x42	£209	780	140x127	129	1.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
BV 10x42	£229	780	140x127	114	1.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
BL 8x33 HD	£379	650	138x130	140	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
BL 8x44 HD	£399	740	150x133	136	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
BL 10x44 HD	£399	740	150x133	115	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
HG 8x33	£945	605	134x130	142	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
HG 8x43	£965	650	153x130	126	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
HG 10x43	£995	650	153x130	114	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
APO HG 8x43	£1,419	650	153x130	126	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
APO HG 10x43	£1,459	650	153x130	114	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
<b>Nikon</b> <a href="http://www.nikon.co.uk">www.nikon.co.uk</a> <b>0330 123 0932</b>								
EDG 8x32	£1,481	655	138x139	136	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
EDG 10x32	£1,583	650	138x139	114	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
EDG 7x42	£1,532	785	149x141	140	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
EDG 10x42	£1,634	785	148x141	135	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
EDG 8x42	£1,736	790	151x141	114	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x42 HG L DCF	£1,356	795	151x139	122	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x42 HG L DCF	£1,460	790	151x139	105	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x42 HG L DCF	£992	695	129x138	136	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x42 HG L DCF	£1,044	695	129x138	114	2.4	Yes	Roof	10 years
Action EX 7x35 CF	£1156	800	120x184	163	5	Yes	Porro	10 years
Action EX 8x40 CF	£1188	855	138x187	143	5	Yes	Porro	10 years
Action EX 7x50 CF	£1178	1,000	179x196	112	7	Yes	Porro	10 years
Action EX 10x50 CF	£1198	1,020	178x196	114	7	Yes	Porro	10 years
Action EX 12x50 CF	£220	1,045	178x196	96	7	Yes	Porro	10 years
Prostaff 7S 10x30	£220	420	123x119	105	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 7S 10x42	£270	645	164x129	108	4	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 7S 8x30	£220	415	123x119	114	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 7S 8x42	£250	650	167x129	119	4	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 7 8x42	£550	650	142x130	140	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 7 10x42	£600	660	142x130	117	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Aculon A211 7x35	£170	685	118x185	163	5	No	Porro	10 years
Aculon A211 8x42	£180	755	145x185	140	5	No	Porro	10 years
Aculon A211 7x50	£200	905	180x197	112	8	No	Porro	10 years
Aculon A211 10x42	£200	760	151x185	105	5	No	Porro	10 years
Aculon A211 10x50	£230	900	179x197	114	7	No	Porro	10 years
Aculon A211 12x50	£230	910	179x197	91	8	No	Porro	10 years
Prostaff 5 8x42	£220	645	165x130	110	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 5 10x42	£240	650	163x130	98	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 5 10x50	£250	815	187x140	98	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Prostaff 5 12x50	£270	790	183x140	82	5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 5 8x42	£400	590	145x123	110	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 5 10x42	£430	600	145x129	96	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 5 12x42	£450	600	145x129	87	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 7 8x30	£320	435	119x123	145	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Monarch 7 10x30	£350	440	119x123	117	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
<b>Olivon</b> <a href="http://www.opticalhardware.co.uk">www.opticalhardware.co.uk</a> <b>01226 203275</b>								
7x30 WP	£109	442	127x160	143	5	Yes	Porro	10 years
8x42 WP	£139	640	175x145	105	7	Yes	Porro	10 years
10x42 WP	£149	640	175x145	105	7	Yes	Porro	10 years
8x40 FZ	£190	1,015	137x130	145	4.5	Yes	Porro	10 years
7x50 FZ	£210	1,260	185x170	110	6	Yes	Porro	10 years

# BINOCULAR SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Price	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Field (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Prism type	Guarantee
10x50 FZ	£220	1,235	180x170	114	8.5	Yes	Porro	10 years
PC 8x42	£279	645	137x110	129	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
PC 10x42	£289	645	137x110	101	2	Yes	Roof	10 years

Olympus	www.olympus.co.uk						0800 111 4888	
EXWP 1 8x42	£460	650	129x145	110	3	Yes	Roof	25 years
EXWP 1 10x42	£540	660	129x145	105	3	Yes	Roof	25 years
EXPS 1 8x42	£210	780	187x130	113	5	No	Porro	25 years
EXPS 1 10x42	£220	785	187x130	96	5	No	Porro	25 years
EXPS 1 12x50	£250	910	192x163	80	6	No	Porro	25 years
DPS 1 7x35	£80	650	180x119	162	3	No	Porro	25 years
DPS 1 8x40	£90	710	182x139	143	4	No	Porro	25 years
DPS 1 10x50	£100	855	191x178	113	6	No	Porro	25 years
DPS 1 8-16x40 Zoom	£110	790	182x152	87-59	10	No	Porro	25 years

Opticalia	www.binocular-repairs.com						02380 455872	
Tom Lock TL Series 1 10x42	£50	655	146x126	98	4	Yes	Roof	5 years
Tom Lock TL Series 2 8x42	£100	670	135x125	129	2	Yes	Roof	Ltd lifetime
Tom Lock TL Series 2 10x42	£100	673	135x125	101	2	Yes	Roof	Ltd lifetime

Opticron	www.opticron.co.uk						01582 726522	
DBA Oasis S-Coat Mg 8x42	£629	656	152x128	122	2.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
DBA Oasis S-Coat Mg 10x42	£629	644	152x128	105	2.2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Imagic BGA SE 8.5x50	£489	795	177x132	105	3.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Imagic BGA SE 10x50	£489	790	177x132	101	3.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Verano BGA HD 8x32	£429	609	128x122	140	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Verano BGA HD 8x42	£439	739	152x128	122	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Verano BGA HD 10x42	£449	738	152x128	113	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
BGA Classic 7x36	£399	623	138x128	126	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Countryman BGA HD 8x32	£349	614	122x117	140	2.8	Yes	Roof	30 years
Countryman BGA HD 8x42	£359	682	124x122	122	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Countryman BGA HD 10x42	£369	701	138x126	105	2.3	Yes	Roof	30 years
Natura BGA 8x42	£279	660	138x126	109	2.9	Yes	Roof	30 years
Natura BGA 10x42	£289	668	138x126	88	2.7	Yes	Roof	30 years
Traveller BGA Mg 6x32	TBC	367	98x118	141	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Traveller BGA Mg 8x32	TBC	380	98x118	111	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Traveller BGA Mg 10x32	TBC	370	98x118	90	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
HR WP 8x42 BCFGa	£249	715	126x183	112	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
HR WP 10x42 BCFGa	£259	725	126x183	89	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
Explorer WA 8x42	£209	672	140x126	110	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
Explorer WA 10x42	£219	638	140x126	113	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
Discovery WP PC 8x32	£169	391	108x117	131	1.2	Yes	Roof	5 years
Discovery WP PC Mg 8x42 (7.5)	£179	703	133x126	131	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Discovery WP PC Mg 10x42 (6.0)	£189	696	133x126	105	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Discovery WP PC Mg 8x50	£199	797	145x133	122	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Discovery WP PC Mg 10x50	£199	813	145x133	115	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Imagic TGA WP 8x32	£149	614	114x165	122	2.5	Yes	Porro	30 years
Imagic TGA WP 7x42	£159	682	142x180	126	4	Yes	Porro	30 years
Imagic TGA WP 8x42	£159	682	142x180	114	2.9	Yes	Porro	30 years
Imagic TGA WP 10x42	£169	687	142x180	97	2.9	Yes	Porro	30 years
Imagic TGA WP 7x50	£179	805	173x191	105	4.9	Yes	Porro	30 years
Imagic TGA WP 10x50	£179	834	173x191	93	4.5	Yes	Porro	5 years
T3 Trailfinder WP 8x42	£139	742	140x128	125	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
T3 Trailfinder WP 10x42	£149	731	140x128	113	1.5	Yes	Roof	5 years
Oregon 4 LE WP 8x32	£99	497	109x116	141	1.8	Yes	Roof	5 years
Oregon 4 LE WP 8x42	£109	677	150x125	114	2.9	Yes	Roof	5 years
Oregon 4 LE WP 10x42	£119	687	150x125	101	2.9	Yes	Roof	5 years
Savanna WP 6x30	£99	485	116x160	140	3	Yes	Porro	10 years
Savanna WP 8x30	£109	491	116x160	130	3	Yes	Porro	10 years

T3 Trailfinder models available in black or green

Ostara	www.opticalhardware.co.uk							01226 203275
Prophecy 8x32	£229	580	139x109	129	1.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Prophecy 8x42	£289	660	147x115	129	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
Prophecy 10x42	£299	650	144x115	101	2.25	Yes	Roof	30 years
Prophecy 10x50	£329	820	172x118	101	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Prophecy 12x50	£349	820	172x118	82	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
Elinor 8x45	£179	855	152x167	145	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
Elinor 7x50	£189	950	185x175	124	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
Elinor 10x50	£199	950	183x175	114	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
Elinor 12x50	£209	960	180x175	98	6	Yes	Porro	30 years

Pentax	www.ricoh-imaging.co.uk						01784 273558	
ZD 8x43 ED	£999	715	146x126	110	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
ZD 10x43 ED	£1,099	730	146x126	105	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
ZD 10x50 ED	£1,199	855	170x132	87	3.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
ZD 8x43 WP	£849	695	146x126	110	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
ZD 10x43 WP	£899	710	146x126	105	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
ZD 10x50 WP	£999	840	170x132	87	3.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
SD 8x42 WP	£399	640	148x134	131	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
SD 9x42 WP	£449	665	147x128	107	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
SD 10x42 WP	£429	615	144x134	105	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
SP 8x40 WP	£249	850	136x178	110	3.5	Yes	Porro	30 years
SP 10x50 WP	£279	1060	178x183	87	5.5	Yes	Porro	30 years
SP 8x40	£129	770	131x187	143	6	No	Porro	30 years
SP 10x50	£149	900	166x196	114	9	No	Porro	30 years
AD 8x36 WP	£249	640	155x129	114	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
AD 9x32 WP	£399	500	138x128	117	2.5	Yes	Roof	30 years
AD 10x36 WP	£299	640	155x129	96	3	Yes	Roof	30 years
AP 8x30 WP	£179	458	120x158	122.3	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
AP 10x30 WP	£199	463	120x158	96.1	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
XCF 10x50	£150	900	198x166	114	9	No	Porro	30 years
XCF 8x40	£140	770	187x131	143	6	No	Porro	30 years

RSPB	www.rspboptics.co.uk						01986 875315	
8x42 HDX	£649	680	140x125	131	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x42 HDX	£699	660	140x125	113	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x32 BGPC	£329	524	125x131	131	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x42 BGPC	£359	585	158x125	113	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
10x42 BGPC	£359	585	158x125	105	2.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x32 WPG	£185	553	112x118	143	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
8.5x42 WPG	£195	731	147x127	133	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
10.5x42 WPG	£205	731	147x127	106	1.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
8x40 ASW	£122	698	143x130	143	4	No	Porro	5 years
8x32 Avocet	£120	487	125x120	122	3	Yes	Roof	5 years

Signton	www.aimfieldsports.com						01606 860678	
SIILR 8x42	£471	895	Length 156	131	2.7	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
SIILR 10x42	£492	895	Length 156	105	2.7	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
SIILMS 8x42	£444	701	Length 126	108	2.3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
SIILMS 10x42	£455	701	Length 126	88	2.3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Series II Blue Sky 8x32	£247	562	Length 132	140	2.6	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Series II Blue Sky 10x32	£263	562	Length 132	114	2.6	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Series II Blue Sky 8x42	£289	680	Length 138	140	2.6	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Series II Blue Sky 10x42	£299	680	Length 138	120	2.6	Yes	Roof	Lifetime

Steiner	www.steiner-binoculars.co.uk						01628 674411	
STE Wildlife XP 8x44	£1,700	830	126x188	133	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
STE Wildlife XP 10x44	£1,750	850	126x188	112	2	Yes	Roof	30 years
STE Cobra 8x42	£430	795	125x148	116	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
STE Cobra 10x42	£450	798	125x148	100	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
STE Skyhawk 3.0 8x32	£320	580	122x127	133	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
STE Skyhawk 3.0 10x32	£350	600	122x127	118	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
STE Skyhawk 3.0 8x42	£390	740	128x147	125	2	Yes	Roof	10 years
STE Skyhawk 3.0 10x42	£430	750	128x147	108	2	Yes	Roof	10 years

Model	Price	Weight (g)	Size (mm)	Field (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Prism type	Guarantee
<b>Swarovski</b>	<b>www.swarovskioptik.com</b>					<b>01737 856812</b>		
CL 8x30 B Companion green	£830	500	119x114	124	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
CL 8x30 B Companion black	£830	500	119x114	124	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
CL 8x30 B Companion sand brown	£830	500	119x114	124	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
CL 10x30 B Companion green	£850	515	119x114	100	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
CL 10x30 B Companion black	£850	515	119x114	100	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
CL 10x30 B Companion sand brown	£850	515	119x114	100	3	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL 8.5x42 WB Swarovision	£1,960	835	160x122	133	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL10x42 WB Swarovision	£1,980	840	160x122	112	1.5	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL10x50 WB Swarovision	£2,110	998	174x134	115	2.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL12x50 WB Swarovision	£2,130	998	174x134	100	2.8	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL 8x32 WB Swarovision green	£1,600	580	138x110	141	1.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL 8x32 WB Swarovision sand brown	£1,600	580	138x110	141	1.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL10x32 WB Swarovision green	£1,630	580	138x110	120	1.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
EL10x32 WB Swarovision sand brown	£1,630	580	138x110	120	1.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
SLC 8x42 WB	£1,310	810	149x120	136	3.2	Yes	Roof	10 years
SLC10x42 WB	£1,380	790	144x120	110	3.2	Yes	Roof	10 years
SLC 8x56 WB	£1,640	1,225	194x141	133	3.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
SLC 10 x 56 WB	£1,690	1,195	192x141	110	3.9	Yes	Roof	10 years
Habiticht 8x30 W	£710	540	114x160	136	3	Yes	Porro	30 years
Habiticht 10x40 W	£800	690	151x172	108	4	Yes	Porro	30 years
Habiticht 7x42	£660	680	154x175	114	3.5	Yes	Porro	30 years

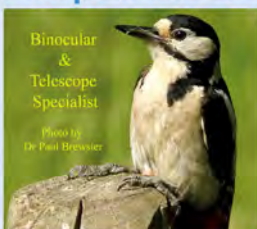
Vanguard	www.vanguardworld.co.uk						01202 651279	
Endeavor ED II 8320 8x42	£330	540	132x128	126	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Endeavor ED II 8420 8x42	£400	770	154x130	126	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Endeavor ED II 1042 10x42	£400	770	154x130	114	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Endeavor ED 8320 8x42	£270	540	132x128	126	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Endeavor ED 8420 8x42	£300	730	154x130	122	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Endeavor ED 1042 10x42	£300	730	154x130	114	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit ED 8360 8x36	£200	530	125x120	122	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit ED 8420 8x42	£240	640	145x125	110	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit ED 1042 10x42	£240	640	145x125	105	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit ED 1050 10x50	£280	845	170x135	98	3	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit XF 8420 8x42	£160	700	150x130	136	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime
Spirit ED 1042 10x42	£160	665	150x130	111	2	Yes	Roof	Lifetime

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8x32.....£1476. <sup>00</sup>	10x42.....£1818. <sup>00</sup>
10x32.....£1494. <sup>00</sup>	10x50.....£1935. <sup>00</sup>

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30 YEARS  
WARRANTY

30 YEARS  
WARRANTY



NEW Bonelli 2.0  
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■ **Make:** Swarovski.  
**Model:** ATX with 65 mm (left), 95 mm (centre) and 85 mm (right) objective modules.



## BUYING ADVICE

# Telescopes

A good scope is almost as essential a part of a birder's kit as binoculars, especially for seawatching or watching waders and wildfowl on large water bodies. **Mike Alibone** guides you through the maze of makes and models on offer.

If you're a keen birder, telescope ownership is almost mandatory. It's the second piece of equipment you're likely to invest in, and can represent a major financial outlay, but the huge variation in model style and pricing means there will always be something available to suit your needs.

Prices currently range between approximately £70 and £3,200, but with little more than 200 on the British market, the number of models from which to make a selection is thankfully lower than the binocular equivalent, while there are approximately 25 per cent fewer manufacturers to

choose between. Most birders will purchase a telescope and keep it for many years longer than binoculars before considering an upgrade, resulting in a slower movement in the market for most manufacturers. It is thought that

the recent rise in use of DSLR cameras with often cumbersome telephoto lenses, instead of digiscoping, has also contributed to a slow market movement in telescopes. Carrying both is not always an option.

But, while the popularity of traditional digiscoping with compact cameras has waned somewhat, it has been replaced by the now widespread use of smartphone cameras and compatible adapters, some of the latter now being manufactured to order on 3D printers in Europe. In this instance image quality is arguably a more important consideration in telescope selection than ever before. This is likely to be closely followed by size, weight and focusing mechanism, and ultimately tempered by price.

It may be tempting to spend as much as your budget allows



■ **Make:** Minox.  
**Model:** MD 60 Z.

on a 'quality' scope, but the telescope market parallels that of binoculars inasmuch as the performance of many recently launched mid-range scopes is creeping ever closer to that delivered by the acknowledged elite.

### WHAT'S NEW?

Innovative developments in design over the last couple of years have resulted in a flush of interesting and advanced new telescope models and devices. Topping the bill in this respect is Swarovski's ATX/STX, the much acclaimed modular design which effectively divides into two halves, allowing a universal ocular module to connect to any of 65 mm, 85 mm or 95 mm objective modules, which can also be easily disengaged for travel and transportation.

Taking a different approach, Leica launched the Extender late in 2014. This compact accessory, based on a camera lens converter, fits neatly between the eyepiece and a Leica APO-Televid scope body, multiplying magnification by 1.8x. Kowa will have its own



version, with 1.6x magnification, on the market by the end of the year. Eyepiece evolution has also been taken to a new level with the development of Barr & Stroud's 'Binoviewer' – effectively the eyepieces of a binocular channelled into a single, fixed 28.8x magnification unit and installed in place of the standard zoom eyepiece on the Sierra 20-60x 84ED spotting scope.

Following a surge in interest

in miniscopes – originally popularised and now immortalised by Opticron's evolving Mighty Midget series – a number of manufacturers have launched new models in this area. At the budget end, Celestron's Landscout 12-36x60 and Viking's 50 mm ED Pro offer low-cost travelscope options, while in the higher price bracket Vortex has launched its top-end Razor 50 HD. The market for these small scopes is growing and other established manufacturers are rumoured to be watching with interest. How long before the top-tier brands enter the fray?

More new scopes to look out for this year include the Celestron Regal M2 100 ED (read the review on page 20), two models from the Minox MD range – the 60 Z and the 80 Z – and the Helios Fieldmaster ED85DS Doublet 20-60x85 (read the review on page 20).

### RESOLUTION ADDS WEIGHT

Despite the popularity of miniscopes, 'going large' has

**1 Make: Leica.**  
**Model: Extender on APO-Televid 82.**

**2 Make: Barr and Stroud.**  
**Model: Binoviewer on 84 ED0 spotting scope.**

**3 Make: Celestron.**  
**Model: LandScout 12 36x60.**



benefits and being prepared to carry around a telescope with a larger objective – which normally results in a larger, heavier body – pays dividends in terms of both image brightness and resolution. In short, and with all other factors being equal, the larger the objective, the higher the level of visible detail, so you are more likely to be able to identify birds at greater distances as a result.

It's not always that simple, however, as a small model from a brand in the top tier will, in many instances, outperform a large telescope from the middle price range as a result of incorporating

3



“Innovative developments in design over the last couple of years have resulted in a flush of interesting and advanced new telescope models and devices”

2



which relates to time and depth of immersion in water.

Waterproofing should extend to detachable eyepieces, some of which are waterproof when fixed to the scope but not when detached.

External protection from both knocks and the elements normally comes in the form of rubber body armour, but the level varies between a solid covering several millimetres deep and a simple layer of thin rubber paint. Some scopes may have a hard anodised body, which is less reliant on armouring for protection, but in any event it's advisable to cover your scope with a padded, stay-on case to add further protection and reduce wear and tear. Many manufacturers supply cases as standard, but they can also be purchased as an extra.

The tripod foot is another important part of your telescope's design and it can represent a significant influencing factor on which brand you purchase. Some manufacturers (including Kite, Leica and Swarovski) have developed tripod feet that are designed to dock directly into the head of a Manfrotto tripod, obviating the need for an interface (quick release plate), which can be considered a point of weakness. If this is not the case you should check the foot has a hole to accommodate the securing pin on the tripod's quick release plate to stop the scope from swivelling, working loose and becoming detached from the tripod altogether. The tripod feet of many telescope models are

now built with a lock-and-rotate mechanism, which is useful for rapid switching between landscape and portrait modes when a camera is attached.

## MAGNIFICATION AND FOCUSING

There are three variations on the method of focusing adjustment, which are not related in any way to the quality of the telescope. The focusing device may take the form of wheel integrated into the body ('helical focusing'), a single knob centralised on top of the body or offset to one side, or a split double wheel which provides a combination of fast focusing with one element and fine tuning for a sharp focus with the other. In each case you should check to see how comfortable it is to reach with the hand you will be using to operate it. Is it located on the same side of the scope as the pan-and-tilt handle of your tripod? If it is, following a moving bird while trying to keep it in focus may prove to be awkward.

Check how many turns it takes to move from close focus to long distance. In this respect there is considerable variation in the number of rotations between different models (compare the two models reviewed on page 20), with many rotations of the fast-focus function making it difficult to keep up with a flying bird but having the advantage of more accurate and 'forgiving' fine tuning for sharp focus on stationary subjects. The focusing wheel should be deep enough, and the surface sufficiently ribbed, to allow positive finger contact even when wearing gloves.

Assuming it's not of a fixed magnification, another moving part that affects the image is the eyepiece. There is a relationship

higher-quality glass elements and superior coatings.

A key external factor to be considered is your tripod. The weight of the telescope you ultimately purchase should not exceed the weight capacity of your tripod head or legs (see the section covering tripods on pages 16-18), and if you plan to add a camera and adapter then the combined weight should also be considered. Remember, too, that the tripod adds further weight to the amount of equipment you are carrying.

## OPERATION AND DESIGN

Both telescope design and ease of operation are important aspects to consider when choosing your ideal scope. The first and most significant design aspect lies in the shape of the body with respect to the position of the eyepiece. Angled eyepiece scopes – with the eyepiece mounted at 45 degrees to the horizontal – have become overwhelmingly popular and are now regarded as the industry standard. They have certain advantages over their straight-bodied counterparts which have become evident through use over the last two decades.

With an angled eyepiece, you can use a shorter tripod or one

on a lower setting without the need to raise the centre column, thereby increasing stability. It is also easier for a group to share without having to adjust the height of the scope, helping to keep the bird in the field of view. They are also easier to use without a tripod in hides when rested directly on a viewing port. One major British optics supplier recently advised that only three out of every 100 telescope sales were straight bodied, with the latter no longer considered stock items.

The construction of the eyepiece itself is also important. You need to feel comfortable when spending long periods with your eye pressed to it, and spectacle wearers should look for eyepieces that offer an eye relief of 16-20 mm in order to see the whole field of view. Screw-out eyecups offer a range of different positions and are undoubtedly more durable than fold-down rubber eyecups, but make sure that the material used will not scratch glasses, if worn.

Your scope should be waterproof and not simply 'weatherproof'; if the former is the case it will be filled with nitrogen gas, although argon is sometimes used. To check the waterproofing scrutinise the manufacturer's specification

BUYING ADVICE

between magnification and image quality because as the former increases there is an accompanying decrease in brightness, sharpness, field of view and depth of field. A zoom eyepiece illustrates this perfectly and the majority of manufacturers will offer both zoom (normally 20-60x) and fixed (for example 20x, 30x or 40x) magnification eyepieces as detachable, interchangeable options on their scopes.

While fixed magnification eyepieces once had the advantage of producing a wider field of view, and a brighter, sharper image when compared with zooms at the same magnification, the latter are now delivering images which are equal in quality. Zoom eyepieces offer the flexibility to be turned through a range of magnifications, allowing you to locate birds on low power and then change rapidly to high power to obtain better views, and for this reason they are now the popular choice.

Scopes with detachable eyepieces also offer the flexibility for attaching certain types of digiscoping adapters and accommodating specially designed camera lenses for digiscoping with DSLR cameras.

FURTHER ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The testing criteria and terminology outlined in the binocular section apply equally to telescopes and, combined with a little research on product specification



■ Make: Vortex. Model: Razor HD 50a.



■ Make: Celestron. Model: Regal M2 100ED.



■ Make: Kowa. Model: 1.6x converter.

and functionality, will help you in your decision making. High image quality is a product of a number of different factors already covered in this and the previous section, although it's worth familiarising yourself with the different glass and lens types that are built into today's telescopes. Superior glass types, such as FL (fluoride or fluorite) and ED (extra-low dispersion) may be used to significantly enhance image quality. Even these may be graded and some are recognisably better quality than others. They will add to the expense (and often weight) of the telescope, as will multi-elemental lenses such as APO (apochromatically corrected) or aspheric lenses, which have different surface profiles to simple lenses. All of these glass types and lens configurations are designed to increase light transmission, sharpen images and reduce chromatic aberration. Don't be misled by terms such as 'HD' (high definition), which in many instances may be used in the model number but does not necessarily mean that refined glass has been used in the model you are considering buying. ■

Birdwatch telescope buyers' guide

about this guide

These tables feature 'mainstream' birding telescopes – widely available models with objective lenses between 50-100 mm. Astronomical and celestial models, with their much higher magnifications, are not included.

- Key to tables:
- Price: recommended retail price.
  - Body: straight or angled.
  - Weight: in grams.
  - Length: where known, in millimetres.
  - Field: field of view (m at 1,000 m).
  - Focus: close focus in metres.
  - Waterproof: yes (usually gas-filled), no or 'weatherproof'.
  - Guarantee: guarantee or warranty.

Model	Price	Body	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	Field of view (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Guarantee
<b>Acuter</b> <a href="http://www.opticalvision.co.uk">www.opticalvision.co.uk</a> <b>01359 244255</b>								
NatureClose ST65A	£129	Angled	1,066	410	43-23	6.5	Yes	1 year
NatureClose ST80A	£169	Angled	1,405	450	37-19	7.5	Yes	1 year
NatureClose ST100A	£239	Angled	1,875	550	33-17	8.5	Yes	1 year
GrandVista DS65A	£179	Angled	1,700	410	45-23	4.5	Yes	1 year
GrandVista DS80A	£249	Angled	2,238	485	37-17	6	Yes	1 year
GrandVista DS100A	£339	Angled	2,500	550	33-17	8	Yes	1 year
GrandVista DS80A-ED	£479	Angled	2,238	485	37-17	6	Yes	1 year

The above models come complete with 8-24 mm zoom eyepiece as standard, providing magnifications as above. The GrandVista models can be used with any standard 1.25" push-fit telescope eyepiece

<b>Avian</b> <a href="http://www.acecameras.co.uk">www.acecameras.co.uk</a> <b>01225 466975</b>								
ED82 & 30xw	£599	Angled	2,005	408	40	5	Yes	10 years
ED82 & 20-60x	£599	Angled	1,960	408	28-14	5	Yes	10 years
Multiview 80 & 20-60x	£349	*Multi	1,900	460	10.7-6	9	No	1 year

\*eyepiece angle can be adjusted to individual requirements

<b>Barr &amp; Stroud</b> <a href="http://www.barrandstroud.com">www.barrandstroud.com</a> <b>01359 244200</b>								
Sprite 10x50	£70	Straight	400	163	101	2.5	Yes	10 years
Sprite 12x50	£70	Straight	395	163	82	2.5	Yes	10 years
Sahara 15-45x60	£110	Angled	950	335	38-19	6	Yes	10 years
Sahara 20-60x70	£135	Angled	1,140	430	29.6-15	8	Yes	10 years
Sahara 20-60x80	£140	Angled	1,270	430	29.6-15	8	Yes	10 years
Sierra 20-60x80	£200	Angled	1,420	442	29.6-15	6	Yes	10 years
Sierra 20-60x84ED	£799	Angled	1,780	-	34.4-17.7	6	Yes	10 years

Sahara and Sierra models come complete with 15-45x or 20-60x zoom eyepiece as standard

<b>Bushnell</b> <a href="http://www.bushnell.eu/uk">www.bushnell.eu/uk</a> <b>020 8391 4700</b>								
Elite 20-60x80	£1,250	Angled	1,484	432	32-16.5	5	Yes	30 years
Elite 8-40x60	£1,675	Straight	1,053	323	83-16	10	Yes	30 years
Legend Ultra-HD 20-60x80	£675	Angled	2,300	419	37-17	8	Yes	30 years
Natureview 15-45x50	£300	Straight	750	275	40-20	10	Yes	30 years
Natureview 15-45x70	£350	Straight	1,070	371	36-16	10	Yes	30 years
Imageview 15-45x70 (with digital camera)	£460	Angled	711	295	40.5-17.5	7.9	No	2 years
Spacemaster 15-45x50 kit*	£250	Angled	646	203	17-38 & 37*	3.3	No	30 years
Trophy XLT 15-45x50	£325	Straight	900	335	50-25	10	Yes	30 years
Trophy XLT 20-60x65	£375	Straight	1,200	340	35-16.3	10	Yes	30 years
Trophy XLT 20-60x65	£375	Straight	1,200	340	35-16.3	10	Yes	30 years
Sentry 12-36x50**	£210	Straight	600	221	46-21	3.7	Yes	30 years
Sentry 18-36x50	£210	Angled	877	373	38-25	6	Yes	30 years

\*Spacemaster kit includes an additional fixed 25x eyepiece  
\*\*includes car window mount

<b>Celestron</b> <a href="http://www.celestron.com">www.celestron.com</a> <b>07850 309592</b>								
UpClose 15-45 50mm Zoom Refractor	£95	Angled	510	254	43.3-21.7	5.8	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
UpClose 20-60x60mm Zoom Refractor Spotter	£105	Angled	652	330	43.3-21.7	8.8	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima Mak Spotter (32 mm eyepiece)	£199	Angled	2,270	406	23	4.6	No	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 65 Refractor Spotter*	£150	Angled	1,049	330	29.7-12.7	6.1	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 65 Straight Refractor Spotter*	£150	Straight	1,049	406	29.7-12.7	6.1	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 80 Refractor Spotter*	£200	Angled	1,616	406	35-17.7	8.2	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 80 Straight Refractor Spotter*	£200	Straight	1,616	483	35-17.7	8.2	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 100 Refractor Spotter*	£345	Angled	2,041	483	31.7-17.7	10.1	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Ultima 100 Straight Refractor Spotter*	£345	Straight	2,041	559	31.7-17.7	10.1	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 65 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£485	Angled	1,700	330	45-23	4.6	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 80 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£675	Angled	2,000	432	37-19	6.1	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 100 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£799	Angled	2,500	508	33-17	7.9	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal M2 65 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£550	Angled	1,327	333	43-23	5	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 80 M2 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£750	Angled	1,607	422	37-17	6.5	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 80 M2 F-ED LER Refractor Spotter (27 mm long eye relief eyepiece)	£800	Angled	1,607	422	40-20	6.5	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Regal 100 M2 F-ED Refractor Spotter*	£900	Angled	2,084	489	33-16	8	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Landscape 10-30x50 Spotter*	£105	Angled	403	222	56-29	10	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime
Landscape 12-36x60 Spotter*	£120	Angled	513	273	52-28	10	Weatherproof	Ltd lifetime

\*with zoom eyepiece

<b>Hawke</b> <a href="http://www.deben.com">www.deben.com</a> <b>01394 387762</b>								
Panorama Double ED Barrel focusing (with SOC)	£799	Angled	1,790	371	35-21	5	Yes	10 years
New Frontier ED Barrel focusing (with SOC)	£700	Angled	1,924	445	49-23	5	Yes	10 years
New Endurance ED 16-48x68 (with SOC)	£530	Angled	1,270	355	43.5-21.5	5	Yes	10 years
New Endurance ED 20-60x85 (with SOC)	£630	Angled	1,590	385	35-17.5	7	Yes	10 years
New Endurance non-ED 16-48x68 (with SOC)	£370	Angled	1,270	355	43.5-21.5	5	Yes	10 years
New Endurance non-ED 20-60x85 (with SOC)	£420	Angled	1,590	385	35-17.5	7	Yes	10 years
Nature-Trek 18-55x65 (with SOC)	£200	Angled	1,048	330	33-14	6.1	Yes	10 years
Nature-Trek 20-60x80 (with SOC)	£220	Angled	1,615	405	38-19	8.2	Yes	10 years
Nature-Trek 22-67x100 (with SOC)	£330	Angled	2,041	485	35-19	10	Yes	10 years
Nature 24-72x70 Kit (with case and small tripod)	£150	Angled	1,045	380	28-14	9	Yes	10 years
Nature 20-60x60 Kit (with case and small tripod)	£120	Angled	795	350	38-17	7	Yes	10 years

<b>Helios</b> <a href="http://www.opticalvision.co.uk">www.opticalvision.co.uk</a> <b>01359 244200</b>								
Falcon Ultra 20-60x80ED	£449	Angled	1,900	474	26.2-19.2	7.3	Yes	1 year
Fieldmaster A90 30-90x90	£125	Angled	1,200	450	78-40	10	Yes	1 year
Fieldmaster ED80DS 20-60x80	£399	Angled	2,150	453	37-17	4	Yes	1 year
Fieldmaster ED60DS 15-45x60	£199	Angled	1,450	351	49-23	5	Yes	1 year
Fieldmaster ED82DS Triplet 20-60x82	£799	Angled	1,885	390	39-20	13	Yes	1 year
Fieldmaster ED85DS Doublet 20-60x85	£599	Angled	1,982	430	36-20	6	Yes	1 year

<b>Kite</b> <a href="http://www.kiteoptics.eu">www.kiteoptics.eu</a> <b>01485 210101</b>								
KSP 80 HD*	£1,999	Angled	1,910	378	39.5-28	3.8	Yes	30 years
SP 82 Body	£499	Angled	1,400	385	-	-	Yes	30 years
SP 82 ED Body	£1,163	Angled	1,537	330	-	-	Yes	30 years

TELESCOPE SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Price	Body	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	Field of view (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Guarantee
SP 60 Body	£429	Angled	898	299	-	-	Yes	30 years
Eyepiece 20-60x**	£329	-	270	74	35-21	4.7	Yes	30 years
Eyepiece 25-50x (WA)**	£419	-	307	74	42-27	4.7	Yes	30 years
Skua Case SP-80 ED NP***	-	-	-	-	-	-	Yes	-

\*price includes 25-50x eyepiece and Skua stay-on case  
\*\*waterproof when attached to telescope body  
\*\*\*Skua cases are available for Kowa, Leica, Swarovski and Zeiss telescopes

Kowa				www.kowaproducts.com					07904 449817
TSN 883 Prominar	£2,190	Angled	1,520	343	-	5	Yes	10 years	
TSN 884 Prominar	£2,190	Straight	1,520	329	-	5	Yes	10 years	
TSN 773 Prominar XD	£1,805	Angled	1,330	318	-	5	Yes	10 years	
TSN 774 Prominar XD	£1,805	Straight	1,330	304	-	5	Yes	10 years	
TSN 661	£638	Angled	1,010	311	-	6	Yes	10 years	
TSN 663 Prominar XD	£1,009	Angled	1,040	311	-	6	Yes	10 years	
TSN 664 Prominar XD	£1,009	Straight	1,020	312	-	6	Yes	10 years	
TSN 601	£523	Angled	735	299	-	6	Yes	10 years	
TSN 602	£523	Straight	720	299	-	6	Yes	10 years	
TSN 825V	£753	Angled	1,490	383	-	6	Yes	10 years	

Prices shown are body only  
Eyepieces for 660/600 series: 25x LER £215; 30x WA £257; and 20-60x £323. Eyepieces for 880/770 series: 25x LER £276; 30x WA £348; and 20-60x £571; and 25-60x£669  
Photo attachments for 660/600 series: TSN-PZ £476. Photo attachments for 880/770 series: TSN-PZ £476; and TSN-PAG £428  
Photo and video attachments for 660/600 series: TSN-VA26 (12x) £495. Photo and video attachments for 880/770 series: TSN-VA2B (14x) £495; and TSN-VA3 (14x) £638  
1.6x Extender, compatible with the 770 and 880 series of telescopes, available from December, price approximately £249

Leica				www.leica-storemayfair.co.uk					020 7629 1351
APO-Televid 82	£2,300	Angled	1,469	328	41-28	3.8	Yes	10 years	
APO-Televid 82	£2,300	Straight	1,520	313	41-28	3.8	Yes	10 years	
APO-Televid 65	£1,700	Angled	1,123	302	41-28	2.9	Yes	10 years	
APO-Televid 65	£1,700	Straight	1,115	288	41-28	2.9	Yes	10 years	

Prices include 25-60x WW eyepiece  
The above models come with a Leica 'Passport' which gives UK accidental damage cover for 1 year

Leupold				www.gmk.co.uk					01489 587500
SK-X1 Ventana 15-45x60	£430	Angled	868	343	37-19	5.8	Yes	Lifetime	
SK-X1 Ventana 15-45x60	£430	Straight	868	343	37-19	8.8	Yes	Lifetime	
SK-X1 Ventana 20-60x80	£630	Angled	1,049	432	27-14	4.9	Yes	Lifetime	
SK-X1 Ventana 20-60x80	£630	Straight	1,049	432	27-14	4.9	Yes	Lifetime	
Golden Ring HD 12-40x60	£1,800	Straight	1,049	315	56-18	4.6	Yes	Lifetime	

Meopta Sports Optics				www.vikingarms.com					01423 780810
S1-A75 APO 20-60x75	£1,058	Angled	1,175	365	31-16	4.2	Yes	30 years	
S1-S75 APO 20-60x75	£1,058	Straight	1,170	365	31-16	4.2	Yes	30 years	
S2-A82 HD 30-60x82	£1,800	Angled	1,430	340	44-21	4.1	Yes	30 years	
S2-S82 HD 30-60x82	£1,800	Straight	1,454	326	44-21	4.1	Yes	30 years	

Minox				www.minox.co.uk					01582 434383
MD50W (with 16-30x eyepiece)	£339	Angled	660	213	33-49	5	Yes	30 years	
MD50W (with 16-30x eyepiece)	£339	Angled	690	235	32-47	5	Yes	30 years	
MD62	£429	Straight	930	328	-	Yes	30 years		
MD62W	£469	Angled	930	328	-	Yes	30 years		
MD62 ED	£599	Straight	930	328	-	Yes	30 years		
MD62W ED	£639	Angled	930	328	-	Yes	30 years		
MD 60 Z	£849	Straight	1,620	310	19-55	Yes	30 years		
MD 80 Z	£989	Straight	2,190	385	14-40	Yes	30 years		

Eyepieces for MD62 series: 20-45x £169; 21-42x LER £255

Nikon				www.nikon.co.uk					0330 123 0932
EDG Fieldscope 65	£1,566	Straight	1,560	313	72 (FEP-20W)	3.3	Yes	10 years	
EDG Fieldscope 65-A	£1,566	Angled	1,620	332	72 (FEP-20W)	3.3	Yes	10 years	
EDG Fieldscope 85	£1,982	Straight	2,030	379	58 (FEP-20W)	5	Yes	10 years	
EDG Fieldscope 85-A	£1,982	Angled	2,030	398	58 (FEP-20W)	5	Yes	10 years	
EDG Fieldscope 85 VR	£3,200	Straight	2,400	379	-	5	Yes	10 years	
EDG Fieldscope 85-A VR	£3,200	Angled	2,400	398	-	5	Yes	10 years	
Fieldscope ED50	£418	Straight	455	209	79 (16x/24x/30x wide DS)	5	Yes	10 years	
Fieldscope ED50 A	£418	Angled	470	207	79 (16x/24x/30x wide DS)	5	Yes	10 years	
Prostaff 3 Fieldscope 16-48x60 (with tripod and integrated zoom eyepiece)	£330	Straight	620	313	40	Yes	10 years		
Prostaff 5 Fieldscope 60 S	£260	Straight	740	290	45 (at 16x SEP 20-60)	5	Yes	10 years	
Prostaff 5 Fieldscope 60 A	£260	Angled	750	305	45 (at 16x SEP 20-60)	5	Yes	10 years	
Prostaff 5 Fieldscope 82 S	£360	Straight	950	377	36 (at 20x SEP 20-60)	5	Yes	10 years	
Prostaff 5 Fieldscope 82-A	£360	Angled	960	392	36 (at 20x SEP 20-60)	5	Yes	10 years	

The following eyepieces are compatible with EDG Fieldscopes 65/65-A: FEP-20W (16x/20x wide) £314; FEP-30W (24x/30x wide) £522; FEP-38W (30x/38x wide) £396; FEP-50W (40x/50x wide) £418; FEP-75W (60x/75x wide) £448; FEP-25 LER (20x/25x) £470; and FEP-30W (16-48x/20-60) £626

The following eyepieces are compatible with Fieldsopes ED82/ED82-A/ED50-A/III/III-A/EDIII/EDIII-A: 27x/40x/50x MC\* £166; 20x/30x/38x Wide MC\* £366; 27x/40x/50x Wide MC\* £314; 40x/60x/75x Wide MC\* £314; 13-30x/20-45x/25-56x MC zoom\* £324; 13-40x/20-60x/25-75x MC II zoom\* £366; 16x/24x/30x Wide DS\* £314; 27x/40x/50x Wide DS\* £314; and 40x/60x/75x Wide DS\* £314

The following eyepieces are compatible with Fieldscopes ED82/ED82-A/III/III-A/EDIII/EDIII-A: 20x/25x MC\* £156; and 24x/30x Wide MC\* £314

\*these eyepieces can be used with EDG Fieldscopes via FS Eyepiece Mount Adaptor EMA-1

The following eyepieces are compatible with Prostaff 5 60 mm and 82 mm Fieldscopes: SEP 25/25x £80; SEP 38W 30/38x £100; and SEP 20-60 16-48/20-60x £140

Olivon				www.opticalhardware.co.uk					01226 203275
T55	£139	Angled	935	365	30-14	7	Weatherproof	10 years	
T650	£239	Angled	1,200	435	30-14	4.5	Yes	10 years	
T800	£349	Angled	1,750	480	35-17.5	9	Yes	10 years	
T800ED	£799	Angled	1,785	480	35-17.5	9	Yes	10 years	
T900	£449	Angled	2,035	550	31-15.7	9	Yes	10 years	
T900ED	£899	Angled	2,070	550	31-15.7	9	Yes	10 years	
T84EDO	£1,129	Angled	2,109	450	34-19.2	6	Yes	10 years	
T84EDO SHR	£1,199	Angled	2,109	450	34-19.2	6	Yes	10 years	

T800/T800ED with 20-60 zoom, T900/T900ED with 22-68 zoom, both include stay-on case

T800/800ED & T84EDO available with SR 20-60 zoom and 16-48x HR2 Zoom £149, FOV 35-15 m @ 1,000 m

T800/800ED available with SR 20-60 zoom (same eyepieces on T900/T900ED available giving 22-68x magnification). Body only available for these models

Opticon				www.opticon.co.uk					01582 726522
HR 80 GA ED	£899	S/A	1,703	405	-	8	Yes	30 years	
HR 66 GA ED	£749	S/A	1,278	330	-	5	Yes	30 years	
ES 80 GA ED	£549	Angled	1,591	390	-	6	Yes	30 years	
ES 80 GA SD	£399	Angled	1,484	390	-	6	Yes	30 years	
GS 665 GA ED	£499	S/A	1,053	326	-	3.8	Yes	30 years	
GS 665 GA	£299	S/A	980	326	-	3.8	Yes	30 years	
GS 52 GA ED	£299	S/A	759	200	-	2.5	Yes	30 years	
IS 70 R	£199	S/A	1,123	300	-	10	Yes	10 years	
IS 60 WP ED	£259	S/A	789	265	-	7	Yes	10 years	
IS 60 WP	£149	S/A	705	265	-	8	Yes	10 years	

HR 80 GA ED: 27x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 39 m @ 1,000 m; and 24-72x SDLV2 Zoom £289, FOV 30-18 m @ 1,000 m. HR 66 GA ED: 20x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 52 m @ 1,000 m; and 18-54x SDLV2 Zoom £289, FOV 37-23 m @ 1,000 m. ES 80 GA ED: 23x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 45 m @ 1,000 m; and 20-60x SDLV2 Zoom £289, FOV 33-20 m @ 1,000 m. ES 80 GA SD: 23x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 45 m @ 1,000 m; and 20-60x HDF Zoom £199, FOV 35-15 m @ 1,000 m. GS 665 GA ED: 18x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 50 m @ 1,000 m; and 16-48x HDF Zoom £199, FOV 42-20 m @ 1,000 m. GS 665 GA: 18x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 50 m @ 1,000 m; and 16-48x HDF Zoom £199, FOV 42-20 m @ 1,000 m. GS 52 GA ED: 13x WW HDF eyepiece £139, FOV 75 m @ 1,000 m; and 12-36x HDF Zoom £199, FOV 62-29 m @ 1,000 m. IS 70 R: 28x WA is eyepiece £57, FOV 41 m @ 1,000 m; and 20-60x HR2 Zoom £149, FOV 40-11 m @ 1,000 m

IS 60 WP ED: 25x WA is eyepiece £57, and 20-60 zoom @ 1,000 m; and 16-48x HR2 Zoom £149, FOV 45-23 m @ 1,000 m. IS 60 WP: 25x WA eyepiece £57, FOV 46 m @ 1,000 m; and 18-54x zoom £75, FOV 31-15 m @ 1,000 m

Ostar				www.opticalhardware.co.uk					01226 203275
HideLite 18-36x	£159	Angled	650	260	34-25	9.2	Yes	30 years	

Pentax				www.ricoh-imaging.co.uk					01784 273558
PF-100ED (with XL zoom)	£2,300	Straight	1,350*	510	26-14	8.5	Yes	30 years	
PF-80ED	£900	Straight	1,950*	397	33-17	5.8	Yes	30 years	

Model	Price	Body	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	Field of view (m at 1,000 m)	Close focus (m)	Waterproof	Guarantee
PF-80EDA (with XL zoom)	£1,400	Angled	2,150*	415	31-16.5	5.8	Yes	30 years
PR-80EDA (with PR XL zoom)	£1,250	Angled	2,400**	410	36.6-18.3	8	Yes	30 years
PF-65EDII	£560	Straight	1,200**	270	33-17	5	Yes	30 years
PF-65EDAll (with XF zoom)	£900	Angled	1,310**	270	33-17	5	Yes	30 years

\*with standard XL 8-24 mm zoom eyepiece; \*\*with standard XF 6.5-19.5 mm zoom eyepiece; \*\*\*with standard PR XL 8-24mm zoom eyepiece

Eyepieces purchased separately are PRXL zoom £279.99; XL zoom £450; XF zoom £280; XW Series all £350; and XF Series 8.5 and Series 12 (both £150)

XF zoom magnification range between 16x and 78x; XF zoom between 20x and 97.5x; XW series fixed magnification between 19.5x and 90x; XF series fixed magnification between 32.5x and 74x according to which scope body is used

All of the eyepieces above are compatible with Pentax spotting scopes PF-65ED II, PF-65EDA II, PF-80ED, PR-80EDA, PF-80EDA, PF-100ED

RSP				www.rspboptics.co.uk					01986 875315
AG 15-45x60	£245	Angled	755	275	59-17	3	Yes	5 years	
AG 20-60x80	£265	Angled	1,220	440	43-14	3	Yes	5 years	
Harrier 65 mm (with 26x and case)	£399	Angled	910	304	47	4	Yes	5 years	
Harrier 65 mm (with 15-45x and case)	£449	Angled	910	304	46-23	4	Yes	5 years	
Harrier 80 mm (with 35x and case)	£449	Angled	1,240	386	35	5	Yes	5 years	
Harrier 80 mm with 20-60x	£499	Angled	1,240	386	35-17	5	Yes	5 years	
HD 25-50x82	£999	Angled	1,500	332	42-27	2	Yes	10 years	

Price shown is body only. Eyepieces (with 60 mm/80 mm): 19x/26x £62; 25x/33.5x £62; and 15-45x zoom/20-60x zoom £90  
7x digiscoping eyepiece £129; 25-50x wide angle zoom for HD 82 not available separately, sold only with scope

Sightron				www.aimfieldsports.com					01606 860678
SII BL 20-60x85 HD-A	£595	Angled	1,871	-	32-16	-	Yes	Lifetime	
SII BL 20-60x85 HD-s	£595	Angled	1,871	-	32-16	-	Yes	Lifetime	

Swarovski				www.swarovskioptik.com					01737 856812
ATS 65 HD	£1,180	Angled	1,405	370	25-50x-42-27 20-60x-36-20	3	Yes	10 years	
STS 65 HD	£1,180	Straight	1,375	375	25-50x-42-27 20-60x-36-20	3	Yes	10 years	
ATS 80 HD	£1,690	Angled	1,675	400	25-50x-42-27 20-60x-36-20	5	Yes	10 years	
STS 80 HD	£1,690	Straight	1,645	405	25-50x-42-27 20-60x-36-20	5	Yes	10 years	

The above are compatible with the following eyepieces (the focal lengths of both 80 mm and 65 mm models are identical so the magnification remains the same): 25-50x wide angle zoom (field of view 42-27) £500; and 20-60x zoom (field of view



# BUYING ADVICE

# Tripods

How much thought do you put into buying a new tripod? Probably not enough, says **Mike Alibone**. Make sure you get the right one by using our expert tips and information.

Often given far less consideration than it deserves, a tripod is an essential component of your birding gear. It can be all too easy to blow your budget on a high-performance scope, leaving little to invest in the equipment so vital to adequately support it.

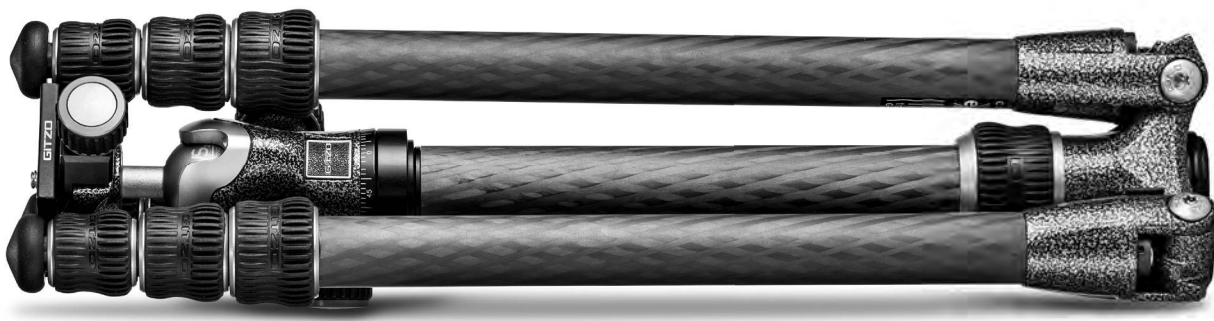
When compared with optics, there are far fewer manufacturers offering tripods suitable for the birding market, although there is still considerable variation in products and retail prices, with the latter ranging from as little as £70 to as much as £1,000 for complete kits. However, your final purchasing decision will be determined less by price and more by the nature of the optics your tripod is required to support.

## STANDING FIRM

Tripods comprise two major components: legs and heads. In many instances these are interchangeable, making it possible to combine the legs from one manufacturer with the head from another. This 'mix and match' approach makes life a lot easier if you favour a particular head but the manufacturer doesn't supply the type of legs you require.

Tripod stability is of paramount importance, so you will need to check the legs are capable of supporting the combined weight of the head, telescope and any peripheral attachments such as camera and digiscoping adapter. Opting for the smallest, lightest tripod you can find could render the set-up top heavy and poorly balanced, with increased potential for collapse. At the other end of the scale, however, a heavy-duty tripod used to support a mini-scope will likely incur a higher capital outlay and could result in lower portability due to greater weight.

If you do a lot of travelling then





a light, compact tripod should be considered. Compactness can be achieved in two ways, the most common of which is governed by the number of leg sections. Tripods with four sections will normally be more compact in terms of collapsed length, but they are potentially less stable as the joints represent weak points. Giotto's – currently with no British distributor – designed a tripod, the Silk Road YTL series (reviewed in *Birdwatch* 249: 52), which minimised the folded width by introducing a tri-concave centre column, allowing the closed legs to compress more closely, thereby minimising bulk and increasing portability. Alternatively, the new Gitzo Traveller tripods employ a 180° leg folding system which makes more efficient use of folded space by accommodating the centre column and head in between the folded tripod legs.

For less weight consider opting for carbon fibre, which is around 30 per cent lighter than aluminium. Carbon fibre legs are easier to carry and not cold to the touch in cold weather, but they are more expensive and offer less wind resistance, being susceptible to blowing over during particularly

windy conditions. Exceptionally, however, some aluminium tripod legs can be equally light in weight; a prime example is the Celestron Trailseeker (reviewed in *Birdwatch* 269: 70-72), which also has four leg sections.

Ideally, the upper section of each leg should have a foam covering, which makes carrying your tripod over your shoulder a little more comfortable if you are not using a carry strap supplied as an accessory by many manufacturers or one of the generic harnesses offered by, for example, Scopac.

Extension height is a major consideration. Your tripod should be able to support your scope at a height that ensures you are in a comfortable and relaxed viewing position; that is, not so short that you have to bend down to look through it. If you are using a straight-bodied scope then the extension height will necessarily be greater. Ensure that you do not have to extend the centre column, which reduces stability and renders the set-up more susceptible to the effects of vibration.

Rapid and reliable leg locking is essential. There are two methods of securing legs at the desired

height: levers or collars – the choice is a matter of personal preference. Levers are quicker to operate and it's easy to see at a glance if each leg section is locked before standing the tripod up. The positioning of levers on the legs varies between brands, with some more ergonomically placed and designed for rapid single-hand opening than others; see, for example the Manfrotto 190X (reviewed in *Birdwatch* 269: 70-72) and the new Manfrotto 290 range. With extensive use over time, levers have the tendency to lose their tension and grip on the legs, so check that your chosen model's levers can be re-tensioned – normally by using an Allen key.

Collars are less obtrusive, neater and more compact than levers. However, they are less easily unlocked simultaneously, as each needs to be rotated to secure locking, therefore making tripod deployment a less rapid process than when levers are engaged.

### GETTING A HEAD

Heads are the most complex and variable part of the tripod system and the type chosen will again depend on user requirements. For general telescope attachment, the most commonly used fixed heads are ball and pan handle. The latter is normally the popular choice, but ball heads, which are often lighter and more compact, operate well with small and medium-sized scopes and work by moving your scope manually, then locking it in position by tightening a lever. Alternatively, squeezing a trigger on the ball head is another method used to pan and tilt the scope before releasing it to lock it in position.

The head should provide balance, stability and the means to move your scope in one fluid motion, smoothly and steadily through all angles to follow a flying bird, as well as being able to observe one that is stationary. Heads may come with a variety of tensioning screws which

allow different speeds of movement of the head to be achieved, as well as being able to independently lock the mounted scope both vertically and horizontally.

The method of attachment of your scope to your tripod head will fall into one of two categories. The conventional means is via a quick release plate (QRP), a component part of the tripod head which screws on to the scope's 'foot' and then locks quickly and securely into the head. Check the QRP has an anti-rotation pin to prevent the scope spinning and ultimately becoming detached from the plate.

Any scope attached to a QRP will work loose over time, rendering it unstable on the tripod and requiring retightening of the fixing screw. Clamp-on accessories have been designed to prevent this, but with varying degrees of success. Current models of Kite, Leica and Swarovski telescopes have feet designed to fit directly into a Manfrotto tripod head without using a QRP, so that owners of these brands can choose to bypass this perennial annoyance if they opt to buy equipment from this manufacturer. It would make perfect sense if a single foot/head port design was adopted and became an industry standard but this seems to be a long way off, if it ever happens.



- 1 **Make:** Manfrotto. **Model:** MK290XTC3-3W.
- 2 **Make:** Gitzo. **Model:** GK0545T-82TQD.
- 3 **Make:** Gitzo. **Model:** GH1382QD.
- 4 **Make:** Celestron. **Model:** Trailseeker tripod.
- 5 **Make:** Gitzo. **Model:** GT1555T (see page 18).

Birdwatch tripod buyers' guide

If you are digiscoping, then consider using a counterbalanced head to offset the added weight of the camera at the eyepiece end and the resultant imbalance of the scope on the tripod. There are two principal designs of counterbalanced head. The simple and less costly versions employ a sliding quick release plate which allows you to position your scope anywhere along a horizontal axis on the head to take account of the altered centre of gravity after attaching a camera. Others provide an in-built tensioning spring, which effectively resists the gravitational force acting on the 'heavy end' of any unbalanced optical equipment, thereby keeping it balanced on the tripod. This can be adjusted for different equipment or simply disengaged altogether.

Unless you are buying online and you know exactly what you require, it will be to your advantage to take your scope and any digiscoping equipment along to a potential supplier and see how it feels when mounted on the tripod. This will enable you to check for any looseness of fit, eliminate any potential incompatibilities and provide a feel for the total weight of the equipment you are likely to be carrying around in the field. ■

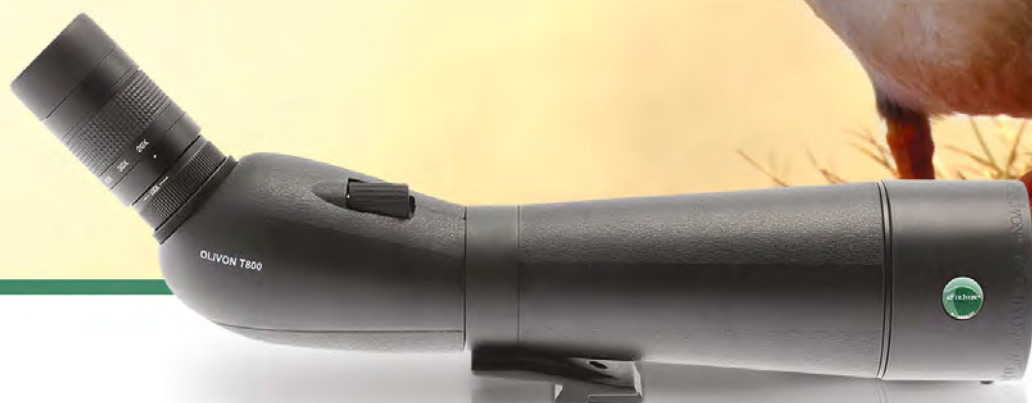


Model	Price	Material	Weight (kg) excluding head	Maximum loading (kg)	Collapsed length (mm) excluding head	Max extended length (mm) excluding column	Max column extension (mm)	No of leg sections	Leg locking system	Guarantee
<b>Benbo</b> <i>The models below are legs only</i> <a href="http://www.patersonphotographic.com">www.patersonphotographic.com</a> <b>0121 520 4830</b>										
Trekker Mk3	£116	Aluminium	2	-	840	1,200	500	2	Knob	1 year
Trekker Compact Mk3	£114	Aluminium	1.6	-	640	920	380	2	Knob	1 year
Classic No1	£162	Aluminium	3.4	-	840	1,220	450	2	Knob	1 year
Classic No2	£191	Aluminium	3.75	-	1,140	1,800	740	2	Knob	1 year
<b>Benro</b> <a href="http://www.macgroupeu.com">www.macgroupeu.com</a> <b>01902 255500</b>										
A1573FS2 Benro A1573F video kit with S2 head	£200	Aluminium	2	2.5	695	1,400	1,570	3	Lever	5 years
A2573FS4 Benro A2573F video kit with S4 head	£275	Aluminium	2.6	4	790	1,590	1,770	3	Lever	5 years
A2573FS6 Benro A2573F video kit with S6 head	£300	Aluminium	3.2	6	805	1,605	1,785	3	Lever	5 years
C1573FS2 Benro C1573F video kit with S2 head	£318	Carbon fibre	1.7	2.5	710	1,410	1,580	3	Lever	5 years
C2573FS4 Benro C2573F video kit with S4 head	£440	Carbon fibre	2.2	4	760	1,540	1,725	3	Lever	5 years
C2573FS6 Benro C2573F video kit with S6 head	£465	Carbon fibre	2.7	6	775	1,565	1,740	3	Lever	5 years
A1883FS2C Benro Aero2 Travel Angel with S2 head	£199	Aluminium	1.9	2.5	465	1,415	1,585	4	Lever	5 years
A2883FS4 Benro Aero4 Travel Angel with S4 head	£259	Aluminium	2.6	4	551	1,490	1,656	4	Lever	5 years
TMA27A Benro Mach3	£140	Aluminium	1.75	14	625	1,350	1,615	3	Twist	5 years
TMA37AL Benro Mach3	£180	Aluminium	2.36	16	680	1,495	1,790	3	Twist	5 years
TMA47AL Benro Mach3	£200	Aluminium	2.85	20	685	1,510	1,800	3	Twist	5 years
TMA27C Benro Mach3	£290	Carbon fibre	1.42	14	625	1,350	1,620	3	Twist	5 years
TMA37C Benro Mach3	£340	Carbon fibre	1.85	16	680	1,495	1,790	3	Twist	5 years
TMA48CL Benro Mach3	£440	Carbon fibre	2.45	20	595	1,515	1,760	4	Twist	5 years
COM37A Benro Combination	£200	Aluminium	2.34	18	615	-	1,340	3	Lever	5 years
COM37C Benro Combination	£380	Carbon fibre	1.89	18	615	-	1,350	3	Lever	5 years
TAD27A Benro Adventure	£120	Aluminium	1.79	12	615	1,350	1,620	3	Lever	5 years
TAD27C Benro Adventure	£260	Carbon fibre	1.38	12	615	1,350	1,620	3	Lever	5 years
TAD38C Benro Adventure	£360	Carbon fibre	1.86	14	565	1,355	1,580	4	Lever	5 years
HFTA18CS2H Benro Hybrid tripod and S2 Arca head	£330	Carbon fibre	1.9	3	610	1,230	1,500	4	Twist	5 years
HFTA28CS4H Benro Hybrid tripod and S4 Arca head	£430	Carbon fibre	2.54	4	650	1,310	1,610	4	Twist	5 years
S2H Benro Hybrid video head with Arca-style plate	£76	Aluminium	0.41	3	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
S4H Benro Hybrid video head with Arca-style plate	£133	Aluminium	0.91	4	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
S6 Benro video head	£160	Aluminium	2.6	6	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
S7 Benro video head	£200	Aluminium	1.4	7	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
S8 Benro video head	£250	Aluminium	2.4	8	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
<b>Celestron</b> <a href="http://www.celestron.com">www.celestron.com</a> <b>07850 309592</b>										
Celestron Trailseeker	£110	Aluminium	1.79	4	610	1,790	315	4	Clamp	2 years
Celestron Regal	£180	Aluminium	2.74	4	628	1,746	248	4	Clamp	2 years
<b>Delta</b> <a href="http://www.infocoptics.co.uk">www.infocoptics.co.uk</a> <b>01485 210101</b>										
Delta V	£129	Aluminium	1.48	4	550	1,315	330	3	Lever	5 years
Carbon 2 MK2	£289	Carbon fibre	1.32	4	540	1,300	420	3	Lever	5 years
Super Carbon 2 MK2	£319	Carbon fibre	1.56	4	540	1,300	470	3	Lever	5 years
PH 157-Q head	£49	Aluminium	0.58	4	105	-	-	-	-	5 years
Delta Travel Carbon	£189	Carbon fibre	1,020	2.5	460	1,340	320	3	Lever	5 years
<i>The above tripods are supplied complete with a PH 157-Q head, which is included in the price, but not in any of the other figures in the table</i>										
<b>First</b> <a href="http://www.opticalvision.co.uk">www.opticalvision.co.uk</a> <b>01359 244200</b>										
Horizon 8115 2-way Heavy Duty Tripod	£90	Aluminium	3.58*	**	780	1,500	450	3	Collar	1 year
<i>*weight includes head **supports all telescopes with up to, and including, 100 mm objectives</i>										
<b>Gitto</b> <a href="http://www.gitto.co.uk">www.gitto.co.uk</a> <b>01293 583300</b>										
GT2180 Fluid head	£209	Technopolymer	0.57	4	-	-	-	-	-	2 years
GT1542 Mountaineer	£605	Carbon fibre	1.28	10	540	1,350	240	4	Collar	2 years
GH1382TD Centre Ball head	£265	Aluminium	0.39	11	-	-	-	-	-	2 years
GH1382QD Centre Ball head	£300	Aluminium	0.5	14	-	-	-	-	-	2 years
GT0545T Traveler Series 0 legs	£560	Carbon fibre	0.90	10	365	1,060	165	4	Collar	2 years
GT1545T Traveler Series 1 legs only	£620	Carbon fibre	1.06	10	425	1,300	230	4	Collar	2 years
GT1555T Traveler Series 1 legs only	£640	Carbon fibre	1.03	10	355	1,210	170	5	Collar	2 years
GT2545T Traveler Series 2 legs only	£720	Carbon fibre	1.34	12	445	1,310	235	4	Collar	2 years
GT2531LV Levelling 6x Tripod 3 Section	£600	Carbon fibre	1.59	12	640	1,380	200	3	Collar	2 years
GT2540LV Levelling 6x Tripod 4 Section	£695	Carbon fibre	1.66	12	610	1,510	210	4	Collar	2 years
GT2542L 2 Series Mountaineer 4 Section	£700	Carbon fibre	1.43	12	610	1,510	240	4	Collar	2 years
GT2542LS 2 Series Systematic 4 Section	£675	Carbon fibre	1.78	25	601	1,500	-	4	Collar	2 years
GT3542XLS 3 Series Systematic 4 Section	£745	Carbon fibre	2.22	25	721	2,005	-	4	Collar	2 years
<i>Standard 2-year guarantee period can be extended to 7 years</i>										
<b>Manfrotto</b> <a href="http://www.manfrotto.co.uk">www.manfrotto.co.uk</a> <b>01293 583300</b>										
095CX3	£310	Carbon fibre	1.8	8	615	1,360	410	3	Lever	2 years
095CXPRO3	£340	Carbon fibre	1.6	8	650	1,400	250	3	Lever	2 years
095CXPRO4	£360	Carbon fibre	1.7	8	645	1,355	345	4	Lever	2 years
095XB	£115	Aluminium	2.3	7	610	1,375	405	3	Lever	2 years
095XPROB	£170	Aluminium	2.4	7	655	1,420	365	3	Lever	2 years
190CX3	£255	Carbon fibre	1.3	5	550	1,190	270	3	Lever	2 years
190CXPRO3	£300	Carbon fibre	1.3	5	580	1,220	240	3	Lever	2 years
190CXPRO4	£310	Carbon fibre	1.3	5	500	1,220	240	4	Lever	2 years
190XB	£125	Aluminium	1.8	5	535	1,185	275	3	Lever	2 years
190XPROB	£145	Aluminium	1.8	5	570	1,220	240	3	Lever	2 years
190XPROL	£145	Aluminium	2	5	640	1,400	240	3	Lever	2 years
190X3 with MHXPRO-2W head Kit	£250	Aluminium	2.76	4	690	1,700	250	3	Lever	2 years
755CX3 Levelling	£420	Carbon fibre	1.93	7	635	1,390	250	3	Lever	2 years
MT290XTC3 290 XTRA legs only	£195	Carbon fibre	1.54	5	627	1,420	235	3	Lever	2 years
MK290XTA3-2W 290 XTRA kit	£155	Aluminium	2.56	5	695	1,460	235	3	Lever	2 years
MK290DUA3-3W 290 Dual kit	£185	Aluminium	2.59	4	740	1,510	245	3	Lever	2 years
MT290XTA3 290 XTRA legs only	£100	Aluminium	1.78	5	595	1,370	235	3	Lever	2 years
MK290DUA3-BH 290 Dual kit	£185	Aluminium	2.26	5	685	1,485	245	3	Lever	2 years
MT290DUA3 290 Dual legs only	£130	Aluminium	1.84	5	627	1,390	260	3	Lever	2 years
MK293A3-A3RC1	£120	Aluminium	1.43	4	549	1,292	190	3	Lever	2 years
MK293A4-A3RC1	£130	Aluminium	1.43	4	438	1,201	190	4	Lever	2 years
MT057C3	£550	Carbon fibre	2.8	18	620	1,320	250	3	Lever	2 years
MT057C4	£610	Carbon fibre	3.5	18	665	1,800	250	4	Lever	2 years
MT293A3	£80	Aluminium	1.4	4	557	1,300	190	3	Lever	2 years
MK393-H	£70	Aluminium	0.93	2.5	405	1,145	190	4	Lever	2 years
MK394-H	£80	Aluminium	1.1	3.5	415	1,165	230	4	Lever	2 years
<i>Tabulated weights and dimensions for kits include head. Standard 2-year guarantee period can be extended to 10 years for all product except MK393-H and MK394-H, which can be extended to 5 years</i>										
<b>Opticron</b> <a href="http://www.opticron.co.uk">www.opticron.co.uk</a> <b>01582 726522</b>										
42116 XFS-C Traveller w/o head	£150	Carbon fibre	1.03	-	525	1,045	250	3	Collar	5 years
42122 XFS-C Birdwatchers w/o head	£180	Carbon fibre	1.28	-	590	1,285	250	3	Collar	5 years
20897 Velbon Sherpa Panhead PH157QK	£45	Aluminium	0.58*	3.5	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
35857 Manfrotto 700RC2 head	£87	Aluminium	0.55*	2.5	-	-	-	-	-	5 years
<i>*compatible panheads are manufacturer's published weight</i>										
<b>Slitk</b> <a href="http://www.slitktripod.co.uk">www.slitktripod.co.uk</a> <b>01628 674411</b>										
SU Master Classic Complete	£250	Aluminium/magnesium	1.78	6	650	1,495	135	3	Collar	1 year
SU 5040F II Video Complete	£154	Aluminium/magnesium	1.95	3	690	1,295	265	3	Twist screw	1 year
SU 5040F II Video head	£62	Plastic/aluminium	0.62	3	-	105	-	-	-	1 year
SU AF1100E head +Q/R (1/4")	£127	Magnesium	0.54	1.5	-	125	-	-	-	1 year
SU AF2100 head (3/8")	£154	Magnesium	0.87	3	-	140	-	-	-	1 year
SU Master Classic head	£74	Aluminium/magnesium	0.77	6	-	130	-	-	-	1 year
<i>The 'complete' tripods are kits and include heads and this is reflected in the tabulated values</i>										
<b>Vanguard</b> <i>Models include heads</i> <a href="http://www.vanguardworld.co.uk">www.vanguardworld.co.uk</a> <b>01202 651281</b>										
Alta+ 23340	£100	Aluminium alloy	1.6	3	610	1,185	1,450	3	Lever	Lifetime
Alta+ 26440	£150	Aluminium alloy	2.1	5	645	1,515	1,780	4	Lever	Lifetime
<b>Velbon</b> <a href="http://www.velbon.co.uk">www.velbon.co.uk</a> <b>01628 674411</b>										
VEL Sherpa 4370D tripod D+PH157Q	£150	Aluminium	1	3.5	498	1,323	310	3	Lever	5 years
VEL Sherpa 5370D tripod+PH157Q	£170	Aluminium	1.961	4	525	1,353	347	3	Lever	5 years
VEL DV-7000N video tripod	£170	Aluminium	3.37	6	602	1,625	220	3	Lever	5 years
VEL Sherpa 200R tripod +PH157Q	£110	Aluminium	1.35	5	515	1,375	300	3	Lever	5 years
VEL Ultra 655 tripod legs only	£135	Aluminium	1.3	4	372	1,250	300	5	Collar	5 years
VEL Videomate 438	£70	Aluminium	0.89	2	508	1,265	260	3	Lever	5 years
VEL Videomate 538	£80	Aluminium	1.1	3	512	1,280	330	3	Lever	5 years
VEL Videomate 638	£90	Aluminium	1.34	4	566	1,385	320	3	Lever	5 years
VEL FHD-51QN fluid head+Q/R	£135	Aluminium	0.6	2.5	-	100	-	-	-	5 years
VEL PH358 panhead for DV6000	£53	Aluminium	0.82	3	-	98	-	-	-	5 years
VEL PH368 panhead for D600/700	£65	Aluminium	0.82	4	-	104	-	-	-	5 years
VEL PH-157Q BK head	£43	Aluminium	0.6	3.5	-	105	-	-	-	5 years
VEL Hide Clamp II	£53	Aluminium	0.256	-	-	125	-	-	-	5 years
<b>Viking Optical</b> <a href="http://www.vikingoptical.co.uk">www.vikingoptical.co.uk</a> <b>01986 875315</b>										
TR100	£109	Aluminium	1.47	15	590	1,320	1,550	4	Click	1 year
TR100 Plus	£139	Aluminium	1.52	15	450	1,300	1,610	4	Click	1 year
TR100 Pro	£279	Carbon fibre	1.27	15	450	1,350	1,550	4	Twist	1 year



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# Fit for a king?



## REVIEW

### Celestron Regal 100 M2 F-ED telescope

**DESIGNED** to impress, Celestron's new 100 mm telescope is the latest addition to the company's flagship Regal M2 F-ED range. This is not a scope for the faint hearted. It's big both in weight and dimensions, while the magnification range runs from 22x to 67x via an interchangeable zoom eyepiece. Despite the magnesium alloy body, with its thin covering of rubber coating, it weighs in at just over 2 kg, and I used the First Horizon 8115 heavy-duty tripod reviewed on page 22 to support it.

With a 100 mm objective, it's safe to assume that both the resolution and the light-gathering capacity will be considerable, and they are. When tested in overcast conditions the scope performs extremely well, producing an impressively bright image that remains sharp to the very edge

of the field. At the highest end of the magnification range there is, understandably, a decrease in brightness, but this is minimal. Obtaining a sharp image, however, becomes much more difficult.

I found the dual focusing ring helps considerably in this instance. It's split so that roughly 60 per cent of proximal turning length governs general focusing, while the remaining distal portion allows the final fine focus adjustment. There is an incredible amount of tolerance in this adjustment which makes precision focusing much easier. This is reflected in the number of turns of the main focusing wheel: approximately 3.75 rotations lie between close focus and infinity, which renders general focusing a little slow.

My only minor grudge relates to the wheel's positioning on the

body of the scope – it's mounted well to the right of the centre of the body, which means it is more difficult to operate with the left hand while using your right hand to operate the pan-and-tilt handle of the tripod.

Overall image quality is commendable, reflecting bright, natural colours with a pleasing degree of contrast, coupled with an acceptably low level of chromatic aberration evident only in the periphery of the field. The overall colour rendition of the image carries a cold, bluish hue.

If the intention is to use the M2 for digiscoping it's worth noting that the package includes a T-adaptor ring for use with a T-Ring for DSLR photography. A sliding balance plate is also included and, along with the three threaded ports on the scope's tripod foot, allows users to compensate for the

extra weight of the camera in repositioning the telescope on the tripod. A generously padded stay-on carry case is also supplied as part of the package.

**Mike Alibone**

## FURTHER INFO

- **Price:** £900 (including zoom eyepiece)
- **Size:** 489x121 mm (including zoom eyepiece)
- **Weight:** 2,084 g (including zoom eyepiece)
- **Field of view:** 33 to 16 m at 1,000 m
- **Close focus:** 8 m
- **Gas-filled:** yes
- **Waterproof:** yes
- **Guarantee:** limited lifetime

## VERDICT

- ✓ Excellent light-gathering properties
- ✓ Sharp image with natural colours and contrast
- ✗ Difficult to operate the focusing wheel with the left hand

# Entry-level precision

## REVIEW

### Helios Fieldmaster ED85DS Doublet 20-60x85 telescope



**AS** a brand new addition to the Helios range, this 85 mm ED telescope set out to cut no corners in quality or performance when it made its debut on the British market this summer.

Similar in style to the closely

related ED82DS Triplet 20-60x82 (reviewed in *Birdwatch* 276: 70-71), it shares the same hard anodised body. This is solid, well constructed and exudes all-round robustness. In addition to having a slightly larger objective, the new model is designed differently from the 82 mm scope. I found the centrally mounted dual-focusing wheels easier to use as a result of their being larger and fully exposed

instead of partly recessed, as they are on the 82 mm model.

The body includes a tripod foot which rotates through a full 360 degrees, subtly click-stopping at 45 degrees and 90 degrees to the horizontal. The deep, sturdy objective lens hood pulls in and out effortlessly. Bayonet fitted, the 20-60x zoom eyepiece is secured by a locking device on the body, above the prism housing.

# A quality build

## REVIEW

### Leica Ultravid 10x50 HD-Plus binocular

**FOLLOWING** the launch of the 42 mm HD-Plus binoculars in November last year, Leica has now extended the range with the addition of three new 50 mm models. From a choice of 8x, 10x and 12x magnification, I opted to put the mid-powered 10x through its paces.

Long in the body and weighing just over 1 kg, this binocular is no lightweight in any sense of the word. While it may be heavy to hold, however, the good news is it's lighter on price, retailing at a substantial £240 lower than its predecessor, which it supersedes.

And it's not light on quality. Design, build and functionality are all typical Leica and aptly reflect the manufacturer's top-tier, high-specification status. Wrapped in smooth, black rubber, I found it very well balanced, with holding facilitated by raised 'thumb-stops' below the oculars, which help with both grip and hand guidance, correctly positioning your fingers to comfortably adjust the focusing wheel. In this respect the strap-lugs are ergonomically positioned so they don't interfere with holding or operation of the wheel itself.

There is a considerable depth of rubber cushioning on the eyecups, which makes viewing very comfortable. Users are likely to find the five-position click-locking mechanism on the eyecups second to none in terms of firmness and positivity.

I found the focusing wheel just a fraction stiff in turning through the 1.25 clockwise revolutions between close focus and infinity; just 0.25 of a turn is required to focus between approximately

20 m and 'distant horizon'. Single-eye focusing is achieved using the same dual-function wheel, the proximal 45 per cent of its depth being pulled out to make the adjustment and pushed back in to lock the setting.

Once focused, the image is superb. It's crisp, very clean, bright and sharp to the edge of the field. Light transmission is up to 5 per cent greater than the Ultravid HD, resulting no doubt from the introduction of new Schott glass used in the prisms and a new high temperature plasma coating being applied to the lenses.

There is some degree of curvature of field at the edges, but chromatic aberration runs at a low level and appears to be restricted to approximately the outer 20 per cent. The overall colour rendition falls into the neutral to cold zone, in which all colours manifest perfectly naturally at a pleasing and lively level of contrast.

This excellent but unarguably heavy binocular comes with slip-on, tethered objective covers, flexible

rainguard, a comfortable neoprene padded neck-strap and a soft – though strong – padded carry case. For a lighter-weight version take a look at the 10x42 Ultravid HD-Plus, fully reviewed in *Birdwatch* 272: 66-67. **Mike Allbone**

#### SCOPE TRADE-IN SPECIAL OFFER

If you're in the market for a new spotting scope, this offer from optics manufacturer Leica could be of interest.

The company is offering £500 off its APO-Televid package, comprising an angled spotting scope, eyepiece and 1.8x extender, when you trade in any telescope or binocular. This special offer reduces the total price of the whole kit for the 65 mm model to £2,270, or the 82 mm scope to £2,870.

To take advantage of this offer, which runs for a limited period, simply trade in any brand and any age of spotting scope or binocular at a Leica participating dealer.

For more information, visit [www.leica-camera.com](http://www.leica-camera.com).



#### FURTHER INFO

- **Price:** £1,750
- **Size:** 178x125 mm
- **Weight:** 1,010 g
- **Field of view:** 115 m at 1,000 m
- **Light transmission:** up to 5 per cent greater than the Ultravid HD
- **Close focus:** 3.35 m
- **Gas-filled:** yes
- **Waterproof:** yes
- **Guarantee:** 10 years

#### VERDICT

- ✓ Excellent image that is sharp right to the edge
- ✓ High light transmission
- ✗ Weighty



■ **Make:** Leica.  
■ **Model:** APO-Televid 82.

The whole system weighs just under 2 kg, making it a little heavier than its 82 mm counterpart, even though the number of objective glass elements is lower. However, the ease of access to the focusing knobs more than makes up for this. These have a finely milled rubber covering, and just 1.5 turns of the fast-focus section takes the image from a very close 6 m to infinity. This provides the user with very rapid, though precise, focusing. However, I found that the fine-tuning element of the system was rather unforgiving and perhaps too precise, with

even small movements of the fine adjustment wheel rendering the image slightly out of focus at the higher ranges of magnification.

The overall performance is highly commendable, with this telescope delivering a pleasing image with bright, natural colours at a good level of contrast. It's also generally sharp across the whole field of view, but not to the extreme edges. The crispness also falls away somewhat at the highest magnification, where I found it difficult to obtain a really sharp image. The loss of light at this end of the range was, however, minimal, and it's worth noting that, at 83 per

cent, the level of light transmission is slightly higher than that of the 82 mm Fieldmaster.

Chromatic aberration runs at an acceptably low degree across the image, becoming more evident toward the periphery and at the higher levels of magnification. The general colour rendition of the image is neutral, with an almost imperceptible warm tone.

With this new Fieldmaster model priced at just £599, it is a full £200 less than the 82 mm scope and as such represents extremely good value. The complete package includes a padded stay-on case.

**Mike Allbone**

#### FURTHER INFO

- **Price:** £599
- **Magnification:** 20-60x
- **Size:** 430x183 mm (including eyepiece)
- **Weight:** 1,982 g
- **Field of view:** 36 m to 20 m at 1,000 m
- **Light transmission:** 83 per cent
- **Close focus:** 6 m
- **Gas-filled:** yes
- **Waterproof:** yes
- **Guarantee:** 1 year

#### VERDICT

- ✓ Bright, natural colours with good level of contrast
- ✓ Good level of light transmission
- ✗ Difficult to obtain sharp image at highest magnification

# Low cost, high quality

## REVIEW

### Kowa BD 8x42 XD Prominar binocular

**JAPANESE** brand Kowa has for many years been a highly respected name in sports optics, making its initial impact in the birding sector with the introduction of high-quality telescopes at the top end of the market. The same level of quality is also found in its binocular collection, of which the BD-XD series forms a part, albeit at the lower end of the Kowa price range.

I chose the popular 8x42 specification to field test and I wasn't disappointed with its performance. The model is solidly built and, despite the 42 mm objectives, feels compact and chunky. The magnesium body makes it relatively light in weight and it's generously covered in hard green rubber armour, which is lightly textured throughout the length of the inner half of each barrel – that's the part which comes into

contact with your fingers and thumbs. Lightly raised ridges divide the different areas of textured rubber above and below; unfortunately, I found those on the underside of the barrels mildly uncomfortable where they came into contact with my thumbs. Aside from this, the binocular is well balanced and otherwise easy to operate, while the semi-recessed strap-lugs do not significantly obstruct holding or focusing.

The gently contoured, rubber-covered eyecups are very comfortable, twisting out smoothly to click-stop decisively in three optional settings above the fully retracted position. Immediately below the right eyecup lies a chamfered single eye adjustment ring, which turns smoothly against a basic five-point incremental scale. The central focusing wheel is broad and closely stippled, turning

through 1.8 anti-clockwise rotations between an impressive 1.5 m close focus and infinity.

A quick check on the field of view specification reveals an increase in value of approximately 20 per cent over Kowa's previous BD model, and I discovered this is without any obvious distortion or significant softening at the edges. Similarly, I was pleased with the low level of chromatic aberration, which is noticeable only in the outer 15 per cent or so of the field. Against a generally warm colour rendition, a bright image returns rich, natural colours with a high degree of contrast – nothing less than I would expect from the brand, and this model is one of the lowest priced within the range.

The BD-XD comes with a padded neck-strap, articulated rainguard, slip-on tethered objective covers and a soft, padded case. **Mike Alibone**



## FURTHER INFO

- **Price:** £499
- **Size:** 132x126 mm
- **Weight:** 660 g
- **Field of view:** 131 m at 1,000 m
- **Light transmission:** not available
- **Close focus:** 1.5 m
- **Gas-filled:** yes
- **Waterproof:** yes
- **Guarantee:** 10 years

## VERDICT

- ✓ Low level of chromatic aberration
- ✓ Bright images with natural colours
- ✗ Raised ridges caused some discomfort

# Brand new heavy

## REVIEW

### First Horizon 8115 2-way heavy-duty tripod

**THIS** tripod's 'heavy duty' epithet should not be underestimated. Manufactured in Taiwan, First's Horizon 8115 is a seriously robust piece of equipment designed to support telescopes with objective sizes up to 100 mm, as well as conventional camera/long lens combinations – or anything else you may care to throw at it.

When fully extended, the tripod has long enough legs to support an angle-bodied telescope at a comfortable viewing height for a six-foot (1.83 m) observer without the necessity to raise the centre column. I found it extremely stable and it supported the large, 100 mm Celestron Regal M2 telescope – reviewed on page 20 – with ease. Its stability results not only from the solidity inherent in its overall weight but also from the ability to screw-lock the bracing on the extended legs, at any angle, to the fixed tube that houses the centre column.

There is no foam or rubber

coating to the upper sections of the three aluminium legs, which means that over-shoulder carrying for a tripod weighing in excess of 3.5 kg over long distances is not to be undertaken lightly, particularly with a large telescope attached.

Deep, rubber-clad twist-collars lock each extended leg section firmly and securely in place, and the tripod sports broad, self-levelling rubber feet with screw-out metal spikes for in-hide or outdoor use in any terrain. If required, there's a spirit level built into the sturdy neck of the tripod at its apex.

The neck also incorporates both a handle to raise the centre column (although it can also be pulled up and lowered manually) and a large-diameter locking wheel to secure the column in its desired position.

As far as tripod heads go, this one pretty much ticks all the functionality boxes, with the exception of providing a

counterbalance. It features tension adjustment wheels in both the pan and tilt planes, which is really useful if you are using a heavy scope with a camera attachment for shooting video. Two winged knobs allow the head to be locked independently in both the vertical and horizontal planes, and a third allows adjustment of the angle of the pan handle, the latter seemingly the perfect length for manoeuvrability.

Scope attachment is via a quick-release plate which includes an anti-rotation pin and slides, rather than drops, in and is held in place by moulded catches before being further secured by a spring locking mechanism, the default position of which is locked. This means whatever you mount on the tripod is not likely to become detached.

Although it's heavy I liked the Horizon, which represents a tremendous amount of tripod for just £90. **Mike Alibone**



## FURTHER INFO

- **Price:** £90
- **Material:** aluminium
- **Collapsed length:** 780 mm (including head)
- **Extended length:** 1,500 mm (height, excluding column)
- **Column extension:** 450 mm
- **Weight:** 3.58 kg
- **Maximum loading:** see above
- **Number of leg sections:** 3
- **Leg locking system:** collar
- **Guarantee:** 1 year

## VERDICT

- ✓ Very stable and sturdy
- ✓ Good value for money
- ✗ Heavy, with no rubber coating on the legs

# Regal M2 Spotting Scopes



Regal M2  
80ED

## Ultra bright, rugged and razor sharp

Day or night, the Regal M2 is optimised to provide the sharpest possible images for bird & nature watching, long distance viewing and casual astronomical observing. These top-of-the-line spotting scopes provide all the advanced features usually found on more expensive instruments, including Extra Low Dispersion (ED) glass. The construction boasts a weight-reducing magnesium alloy body and an upgraded dual focus mechanism that brings the subject into focus twice as fast as conventional scopes. Waterproof and nitrogen-purged for all-weather use, it can also be attached to a camera, using a T-ring and the included T-adaptor, to record your discoveries.

For more information, please visit [www.celestron.com](http://www.celestron.com)

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